

STARS AND STRIPES®

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2004

Army shifts focus to armor trucks in Iraq

With Humvees being taken care of, other vehicles get attention Page 5



Williams, Elway, others bring cheer to troops in Iraq

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PHOTOS BY RON JENSEN/Stars and Stripes

Comedian Robin Williams, left, meets fans Tuesday at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq, during a USO show. Williams was joined by Hall of Fame NFL quarterback John Elway — at right with Sgt. Samuel Lopez of the 961st Quartermaster Company — comedian Blake Clark and model Leanne Tweeken for a brief show and a long autograph session.

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Rapper's death: The death of rapper O.D.B. was deemed an accident by the New York City medical examiner, who said Wednesday that he died from the combined effects of cocaine and a prescription painkiller.

O.D.B., whose legal name was Russell Jones, died at a Manhattan recording studio Nov. 13 "as a result of intoxication" by cocaine and the painkiller Tramadol, said Ellen Borakove, a spokeswoman for the New York City medical examiner's office.

O.D.B. complained of chest pains before collapsing at the studio, and was dead by the time paramedics reached him. He was just days short of his 36th birthday.

O.D.B., also known as Ol' Dirty Bastard, was a founding member of the rap group the Wu-Tang Clan.

Michael Jackson investigation: Prosecutors in Michael Jackson's child molestation case want to introduce evidence that the singer has committed other sex crimes over the years that went unchanged.

Prosecutors argue in a motion released Tuesday that the evidence should be admitted under a 1995 California law that lets relevant previous acts, whether prosecuted or not, be considered in sex crime cases.

The motion from the district attorney's office, as well as a defense request for a six-week delay of the scheduled Jan. 31 trial, were released by the court with key sections blacked out and are scheduled for argument in hearings to begin Monday.

Death wish granted: A man who attacked a family, killing two children, apparently because he believed the mother had urged his girlfriend to break up with him, was sentenced to death Tuesday in Burlington, Ky., at his own request.

Marco Chapman, 33, pleaded guilty last week to the murders and asked the judge to give him the death penalty. He sat motionless in court Tuesday as the sentence was handed down.

Cody Sharon, 6, and Chelbi Sharon, 7, were killed in death in 2002. The children's mother, Carolyn Marksbury, who was also attacked, described Chapman as a "monster" during the sentencing.

Baby's severed-arms death: A McKinney, Texas, mother who admitted killing her baby daughter by severing the girl's arms was guided by a Bible passage in which Jesus refers to cutting off body parts to cast away sin, the woman's attorney said Tuesday.

Dena Schlosser, a 35-year-old housewife with a history of mental illness, has referred to the New Testament passage since the killing of 10-month-old Margaret, attorney David Haynes told The Associated Press.

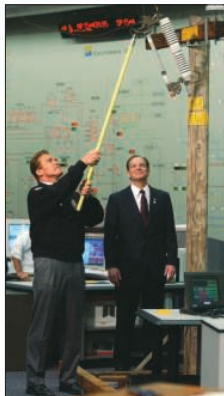
Schlosser was charged with capital murder Nov. 22, after she told an emergency services operator she had cut off her baby's arms. Police found her in the living room, covered in blood, still holding a knife and listening to a hymn.

Haynes said Schlosser was mentally ill at the time.

Business

Time Warner-AOL fraud settlement: Time Warner Inc. has agreed to pay \$210 million to settle securities fraud charges involving the company's America Online unit, law enforcement officials said Wednesday.

Under terms of the settlement with the Justice Department, prosecution on charges



Energizing California: Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, left, uses a "hot stick" Tuesday to close the loop that energizes the

Path 15 expansion, during ceremonies at the California Independent System Operator in Folsom, Calif. Schwarzenegger was accompanied by Kyle McSlarrow, deputy secretary for the U.S. Department of Energy, at the event that completed the circuit of the 500-kilovolt, 84-mile stretch of power line to help relieve the energy bottleneck between northern and southern California. A \$250 million upgrade added a third transmission line through the critical 84-mile section of the state's power grid.

of aiding and abetting securities fraud will be deferred provided that AOL and Time Warner cooperate in an ongoing investigation into whether AOL improperly helped smaller Internet companies artificially inflate their earnings.

An independent monitor will be chosen to oversee AOL's compliance and the company must agree to a number of changes in its internal practices, said a Justice Department official who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

Military

School strafing: Pilots will resume training Thursday at a military range that has been shut down since an F-16 fighter accidentally fired at an Little Egg Harbor Township, N.J., intermediate school last month, officials said.

Though training will resume at the Warren Grove Gunnery Range, no weapons will be fired for now. Changes have been made to increase safety, Col. Brian Webster said.

"We've implemented a number of new operational procedures and guidelines that allow us to safely resume temporary, limited, non-ordnance training," Webster said in a statement. He commands the 17th Fighter Wing of the New Jersey Air National Guard, which supervises the range.

World

Yushchenko's poisoning: New tests reveal the level of dioxin in the blood of Ukrainian presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko is more than 6,000 times higher than normal, according to the expert analyzing the samples.

The concentration, about 100,000 units per gram of blood fat, is the second highest ever recorded, said Abraham Broer, professor of environmental toxicology at the Free University in Amsterdam, where blood samples taken last weekend in Vienna were sent for analysis.

Almost everyone has some level of dioxins because the toxic chemical is widespread in the environment — mainly from its industrial usages.

In the case of Yushchenko, Broer's team has narrowed the search from more than 400 dioxins to about 29 and is confident they will identify the poison by week's end. That, in turn, could provide clues for the investigation of the alleged poisoning.

Philippine storms aftermath: The Philippines and international aid groups appealed Wednesday for donations to help millions of Filipinos rebuild their homes and ward off disease following a series of deadly storms.

The northeastern Philippines was battered by four typhoons and tropical storms that began late last month and came in rapid succession, killing more than 1,000 people and leaving 566 others missing, the Office of Civil Defense said.

The World Health Organization has warned that some 3.6 million people were threatened by diseases such as malaria and diarrhea.

Afghan attack: Provincial forces who came under attack killed in coalition artillery support that killed seven insurgents in southeastern Afghanistan, a U.S. official said Wednesday.

The clash occurred Monday night in Khost province, and no coalition or provincial forces were wounded, U.S. Maj. Mark McCann told a regular media briefing.

Indian train collision: Railway officials say a train collision in northern India that killed at least 37 people apparently was caused by a communications lapse between stations, and that the two stationmasters face criminal charges in the disaster.

An express passenger train and a local train collided head-on Tuesday in a rural stretch of northern Punjab state, killing both drivers plus 35 other people aboard the trains. Rescuers had recovered all bodies by Wednesday and the tracks were cleared for traffic to resume, Siddiqui said.

War on terrorism

Request for clemency: U.S. Sen. Mike DeWine asked the Army to grant clemency to two Ohio soldiers imprisoned for taking Army vehicles abandoned in Kuwait by other units so they could carry out their own mission in Iraq.

In a letter to Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, commander of the multinational force in Iraq, DeWine asked that the punishment for Darrell Birt, of Columbus, and Mafy Cathy Kaus be reduced to time served.

Birt, Kaus and four other members of the 650th Transportation Company based in Springfield, Ohio, were court-martialed and charged with theft, destruction of Army property and conspiracy to cover up their crimes.

Stories and photo from wire services

Correction

A story in Tuesday's editions on a new film, "Gunner Palace," incorrectly identified 1st Lt. Ben Colgan, who was killed in November 2003 while fighting in Iraq.

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Navy investigated alleged war crimes

BY PAISLEY DODDS

The Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Newly released U.S. Navy documents portray a series of abuse cases stretching beyond Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison where photos surfaced this year of U.S. troops forcing prisoners — often naked — to pose in humiliating positions.

The files released Tuesday document a crush of abuse allegations, most from the early months of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, including U.S. Marines forcing Iraqi juveniles to kneel while troops discharge a weapon in a mock execution and the use of an electric shock on a prisoner.

The approximately 10,000 files include investigation reports from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and witness interviews.

All names have been blacked out in the documents, which were released after a federal court ordered the government to comply with a Freedom of Information Act petition filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Constitutional Rights and other organizations.

"This kind of widespread abuse could not have taken place without a leadership failure of the highest order," said ACLU Executive Director Anthony D. Romero.

The Pentagon says the cases have been taken seriously and investigated.

Documents reveal early accounts of Marines mistreating prisoners

"The fact that these cases have been investigated underscores the point that we've been making, which is when we have credible allegations of abuse we take them seriously and investigate them," said Maj. Michael Shavers, a Pentagon spokesman.

Some of the documents include the alleged executions of Iraqis.

The Navy found the allegations to be "unsubstantiated" and closed the investigation. It remains unclear whether any other military branches are investigating.

In one of the reports, a Marine said he and two others were ordered to kill three Iraqis.

"The executions allegedly took place in early April 2003 while the unit was temporarily based at an abandoned Iraqi pharmaceutical factory south of Baghdad," according to the NCIS document, dated June 26, 2003.

The Marine said he was threatened with death if he did not carry out the order. The bodies of the dead Iraqis allegedly were dumped in a hole, the document said.

After the incident was reported, the Marines were interviewed.

One, who was interviewed and advised of his rights, retracted his previous statements, saying the executions never took place.

He said he "made up the story to tell his friends ... unlike his colleagues, he didn't have good stories to tell about his deployment to Iraq," the report said. It added that the Marine said he was drunk and made up the story while at a party.

The suspect, whose name along with others allegedly involved was blacked out, was given a polygraph test, "an evaluation of the examination indicated [he] was being truthful in his responses."

Troops have said many of them are trained in ways to trick polygraph examiners. It was unclear whether the Marine was disciplined for the alleged fabrication.

At least 19 prisoner deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan have been investigated by the military; eight were determined to be justified killings of an escaping or dangerously violent prisoner.

Several Marines have been charged in connection with the treatment of a member of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party who

died of strangulation after a Marine grabbed him by the neck at a holding facility. Investigators ruled that the death was accidental, but other investigations are pending.

In another of the documents, a Navy corpsman is quoted as saying, "there was a lot of peer pressure to keep one's mouth shut."

In yet another, a Navy investigator describes his Iraq caseload as "exploding" with "high visibility cases."

One case occurred on April 13 in al-Mahmudiya, Iraq, where a witness — whose name has been blacked out — saw a Marine "shock an Iraqi detainee with an electric transformer," holding "wires against the shoulder area of the detainee [who] danced as he was shocked."

Five suspects were involved in the case, according to the document. One of them was found guilty of assault, cruelty and maltreatment, among other charges, and was sentenced to a year in the brig. A second suspect was found guilty of cruelty and maltreatment, and was sentenced to eight months.

The cases of the three others in the case are pending, according to the documents.

In a case from June 2003, Marines in Adwanahy ordered "four juvenile Iraqi looters to kneel beside a shallow fighting hole and a pistol was discharged to conduct a mock execution."

It was unclear from the redacted documents whether anyone was disciplined.

Bomb kills 7 at Baghdad Shiite shrine

Allawi announces plans to run for elected office

BY PAUL GARWODE

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A bomb exploded at the gate of a revered Shiite shrine Wednesday, killing seven people in an apparent attempt to kill an aide to Iraq's top Shiite cleric and casting the shadow of violence over the first day of campaigning in the country's crucial January elections.

The attack in Karbala, which wounded the representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, came hours after the campaign kicked off with Iraqi interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi announcing his candidacy. Allawi's defense minister accused Iranian and Syrian intelligence agents of helping insurgents in Iraq.

Also on Wednesday, a Western official in Baghdad said Saddam's notorious right-hand man, Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as "Chemical Ali," would be among the first to appear in court next week to face charges for crimes allegedly committed during Saddam's 35-year dictatorship. Allawi said earlier that formal indictments could be issued against some of Saddam's top deputies next month — just ahead of the Jan. 30 election.

Ali Hassan al-Majid, who was No. 2 on the coalition's list of most-wanted playing cards, is accused of ordering the 1988 Halabja chemical weapons attacks against Kurds, the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and suppressing a 1991 Shiite uprising in southern Iraq.

He is among 12 regime members, including Saddam who was arrested a year ago Monday, waiting to face trial. But the former Iraqi president will not be among those to appear in court next week. The Associated Press has learned.

The blast south of Baghdad underlined worries over security during the campaign and the election,



Iraqi National Guards secure the area during interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's press conference in Baghdad on Wednesday. Allawi announced that he joined the race for Iraq's Jan. 30 elections.

with insurgents expected to attempt to derail the vote creating a national assembly.

While Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority has welcomed an election it likely will dominate, Sunni Arabs have expressed fears they will be eclipsed and some have called for a boycott of the vote. Ali al-Sistani has backed a coalition of major Shiite political parties that has put forward a list of candidates and is expected to do well in the first national election since Saddam's fall.

Sunni militants have been accused in past attacks against Shiites and their holy sites. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Wednesday's bombing.

The blast went off at the western gate of the Imam Hussein Shrine in Karbala, killing seven people and wounding 31, said Dr. Abdul-Abbas Al-Tinimi, director of Al-Hussein hospital.

Al-Sistani's representative, Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalayee, was among the wounded, and an al-Sistani spokesman said al-Karbalayee was the intended target of the blast. Several of his bodyguards were among the dead and wounded, the spokesman — Hamed al-Khafaf — told Al-Jazeera television.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Tuesday, at least 1,301 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,019 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Tuesday.

The British military has reported 74 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,163 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 910 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ Two Marines were killed Monday in Anbar province, Iraq.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Gregory P. Rund, 21, Littleton, Colo., killed Saturday in hostile action in Anbar province, Iraq, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 5th

Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1 Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

■ Army Cpl. Joshua A. Ramsey, 19, Defiance, Ohio, died Sunday of non-combat injuries in Baghdad, assigned to the 95th Military Police Battalion, Mannheim, Germany.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Jeffrey S. Blanton, 23, Fayetteville, Ga.; killed Sunday in hostile action in Anbar province, Iraq, assigned to the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base, Hawaii.

■ Marine Staff Sgt. Melvin L. Blazer, 38, Moore, Okla.; Marine Cpl. Jason S. Mirdard, 21, Camp Fulton, Ala.; Marine Sgt. Jeffrey L. Kirk, 24, Baton Rouge, La.; Marine Lance Cpl. Hilario F. Lopez, 22, Inglede, Texas; and Marine Cpl. Ian W. Stewart, 21, Lake Hughes, Calif.

All killed Sunday in hostile action in Anbar province, Iraq, assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

■ Marine Pfc. Brent T. Vroman, 21, Oskosh, Wis., and Marine Lance Cpl. Richard D. Warner, 22, Waukegan, Ill., killed Monday in hostile action in Babil province, Iraq; assigned to the Marine Corps Reserve's 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, 8th Marine Division, Chicago, Ill.

U.S. officials pleased with rebuilding effort in Iraq

BY LEO SHANE III
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Despite a virtual standstill of reconstruction efforts in the areas of Iraq hardest hit by insurgents, U.S. officials on Wednesday said they were pleased with the overall rebuilding effort in the country.

Charles Hess, director of the U.S. Project and Contracting Office, told reporters that about \$14 billion of the \$18.4 billion assigned by Congress for reconstruction has been earmarked for specific projects, and work has begun on 70 percent of those. "We're now starting to see the results of some of our efforts," he said.

"Even though the situation is difficult, even though the security environment is not what we'd like it to be, progress is being made on the construction side," he said. "We're now starting to see the results of some of our efforts."

Reconstruction teams passed the 1,000-project mark in late November, and are on pace to hit 1,200 by the end of the year.

But so far little work has begun in the Sunni Triangle, and U.S. officials have not spent any of the \$80 million they have set aside for construction projects in Fallujah, Hess said.

"We're working with commanders to go into cities that have been removed from insurgent hands, specifically at the time and place they say it's safe to go in there," he said. "We intend to continue on still executing the programs that we have, unless the facilities we were going to restore don't happen to be there any more."

Hess also expects a sharp increase in completed construction over the next four months. Contractors typically don't receive the bulk of their payments until projects are finished, and only about \$2 billion of the reconstruction funds have been paid out.

Hess estimated that more than 103,000 Iraqis are employed in the construction.

Those numbers dropped significantly at the start of Ramadan, based on fears of terrorist attacks during the holy month, and have fluctuated based on violence throughout the country, Hess said less than 5 percent of construction sites have been attacked, and officials do not anticipate a drop-off in workers leading up to the Iraq elections.

"Intimidation is a widespread problem: Iraqi supervisors have been threatened, workers have been threatened, and in some cases family members have been killed," Hess said.

"The encouraging note there is that even though this is happening, the employers and employees are still willing to come to work, and they still value what reconstruction is doing for them and their country."

E-mail Leo Shane at: shane@stripes.osd.mil



Afghan prisoners in U.S. military custody were caught in April in the mountains next to Zurchorah Village in the Khost area, about 155 miles southeast of Kabul, Afghanistan. The U.S. military said Wednesday it has at least six open cases of prisoners who died in custody in Afghanistan dating back to 2002, but claimed it has taken steps to ensure against abuse of detainees.

U.S. defends detainees' care in Afghanistan

BY PAUL ALEXANDER
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military said Wednesday it has at least six open cases of prisoners who died in custody in Afghanistan dating back to 2002, but claimed it has taken steps to ensure against abuse of detainees.

Amid the fallout over abuse of prisoners in Iraq, Brig. Gen. Charles Jacoby Jr. was dispatched in May to examine treatment of current detainees at the two U.S. prisons and 20 "field holding sites" in Afghanistan. His report, which is still under review with no time set for release, found no evidence of abuse, Maj. Mark McCann told a news conference Wednesday in Kabul.

However, the report does not examine earlier incidents, including the deaths of prisoners, and The Washington Post has reported that Jacoby found many shortcomings, including inadequate enforcement of approved interrogation rules.

"We can't go back and change the past," McCann said. "What we can do is ensure that there are conditions in place now for the future, where we ensure that this

stuff will not happen again."

Pentagon officials earlier this week put the number of prisoner deaths in Afghanistan that have been investigated since mid-2002 at eight, a higher number than previously reported.

McCann said three of the fatalities remain under investigation and three are pending judicial disposition. One case is complete, but he would not provide details. He did not know the status of the eighth.

He would not say how many detainees U.S. forces are holding in Afghanistan and declined media requests to visit the detention facilities, saying it would violate Geneva Convention rules on treatment of prisoners of war.

"We're not allowed to put them on display, period, because it would be like we would be exploiting them," McCann said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is allowed to meet with detainees and inspect the main prisons at Bagram air base outside Kabul and in the southern city of Kandahar, but not the 20 "field holding sites" scattered around the country that process detainees before they are transferred to one of the larger facilities, McCann said. Jacoby's inspection covered all 22 sites.

Body of Iraqi to be exhumed for trial of GI blamed in death

BY ANGELA K. BROWN
The Associated Press

FORT HOOD, Texas — A military judge on Tuesday approved a request to exhumate the body of an alleged Iraqi drowning victim who prosecutors said died after being shoved into the Tigris River by U.S. troops.

The request to exhumate came from attorneys for Army 1st Lt. Jack Saville, who says he is innocent of ordering the man pushed into the river and that the alleged victim may still be alive.

Saville, a 24-year-old West Point graduate, is charged with involuntary manslaughter, conspiracy, aggravated assault, obstruction of justice and lying to investigators. Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Perkins, a fellow 4th Infantry Division soldier, faces the same charges.

The soldiers are accused of ordering soldiers to push two Iraqis into the river in Samarra in January as punishment for violating curfew. Zaidoun Hassoun, 19, drowned. The assault charge pertains to the cousin, Marwan Hassoun, who says Zaidoun Hassoun died just out of his reach.

Prosecutors objected to the exhumation, saying it would be difficult in a war zone and also that the condition of the body after being buried for a year could make it impossible to determine the identity

or cause of death.

But defense attorneys say the alleged victim — even if he is dead — didn't die in the January incident described by prosecutors.

"He [Saville] believes that no one died and we'll do what we have to do to get a fair trial," said Frank Spinner, Saville's attorney from Colorado Springs, Colo.

Spinner also on Tuesday withdrew his motion seeking renewed efforts to locate alleged witnesses who say the victim did not drown but walked away.

At a July hearing at Fort Carson, Colo., investigators acknowledged they never saw a body, that they instead relied on the word of relatives and a family videotape showing a corpse in a coffin. Also, three soldiers on patrol that night testified at the hearing that they saw two Iraqis climbing out of the river, but that investigators were only interested in finding out who had forced the men off the bridge.

Saville and Perkins also face a second assault charge for allegedly forcing another Iraqi man off a bridge over the Tigris in December 2003 near Bad.

Trials for Saville and Perkins, 33, were set for next month, but the judge delayed Saville's court-martial until March 15. Perkins' attorney, Capt. Josh Norris, declined to comment Tuesday on whether the judge's order would affect his court-martial date.

The soldiers, part of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team at Fort Carson, face up to 29 years in prison if convicted on all counts.



Saville

Marines' psychiatric suffering documented

Los Angeles Times

U.S. Navy documents released Tuesday provided detailed accounts of Marines suffering from psychiatric problems after serving in Iraq.

The portraits of the psychologically damaged troops were painted in documents obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union through a Freedom of Information Act petition.

According to the documents, some Marines appeared delusional,

describing how they single-handedly shot Iraqi soldiers in combat, or stabbed Iraqis on the ground who might have been feigning death.

One said he was feted at a special dinner with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld. Another bragged of being honored at a homecoming parade. Neither event occurred.

Another Marine described shooting enemy soldiers off of a conveyor belt in a cement factory,

and then being shot himself. He said he next "fired all his ammo and threw his knives at his assailant."

Another Marine told how he and his unit would "go through wild" and stab Iraqi soldiers lying on the ground to make sure they were dead.

"I didn't have a bayonet; the Marines were out of bayonets," the Marine told investigators. "I had to stick Iraqis with machetes." The men's stories were contradicted.

Army turns focus to armoring trucks in Iraq

By LISA BURGESS
Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — After expanding its contract to acquire armored Humvees at a rate of \$50 per month instead of \$50, the Army has now turned its focus toward armoring its trucks in Iraq by June, Army officials said Wednesday.

And in the future, thanks to lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, all Army vehicles will be designed so they can be quickly armored with a kit — even if that vehicle was never designed for combat, according to Gary Motsek, the Army's deputy director for support operations at the U.S. Army Materiel Command at Fort Belvoir, Va.

"We can't just go ahead and disregard the lessons of this campaign," Motsek said. "We are adapting our truck strategies now, [because] we'll never again assume that if you are going to operate a truck fleet, that it's going to be in conditions [that are] safe and secure."

The Humvee issue is now on track and fully funded, said Maj. Gen. Stephen Speakes, who joined Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sorenson and other Army officials to discuss the armoring issue.

"A year ago, Humvees were the priority," Speakes said. "Now with the increase of lethality on the battlefield, it's time to



Gary Motsek, the Army's deputy director for support operations at the U.S. Army Materiel Command at Fort Belvoir, Va., shows the armored plating on the door of a HEMTT, the Army's Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck, at the Pentagon on Wednesday.

take care of the bigger trucks, and we're doing that."

The Army has sought out manufacturers to acquire armor kits for the larger vehicles. In August 2003, there were seven companies that supplied armor kits. There are now more than 20.

Today, 53 percent of the medium and heavy vehicles in Iraq that commanders

have said they would like armored actually have such protection, according to statistics provided by the Army.

Speakes, who is in charge of Force Development for the Army, said the service plans to spend \$4.1 billion to armor all of its wheeled vehicles by next summer.

The project to armor every wheeled transport vehicle will include armoring

5,878 "medium transport vehicles," such as five-ton trucks, and 4,443 "heavy transport vehicles," such as the 10-ton Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck (HEMTT), according to the statistics.

"We believe that by June, we will have Level I and Level II armor on the [remaining wheeled] force," Speakes said.

Level I is the Army's term for vehicles that were built from the ground-up to support armor, including a reinforced chassis to support the extra weight and configurations of the plating.

Level II is what the Army calls specially designed kits that are manufactured in the United States, then shipped to the Iraq theater for soldiers to install on their vehicles.

There is another Level, Level III, which Army officials use to describe the ad-hoc additions that soldiers devise on their own to protect their vehicles in the field.

Armoring vehicles not normally designed for combat operations became a serious issue in Iraq starting in early September 2003, as improvised explosive devices began to take more and more of a toll on U.S. forces in Iraq.

The Senate Armed Services Committee will hold hearings on the Iraq war when the new Congress convenes next month, including an examination of criticism that the Defense Department failed to prepare for the insurgency and went into action with a shortage of armor for trucks and Humvees, the panel's ranking Democrat, Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., told the Washington Post on Tuesday.

E-mail Lisa Burgess at: burgessl@stripes.osd.mil

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Snow brings stars, smiles to troops in Iraq

BY RON JENSEN
Stars and Stripes

LOGISTICS SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Iraq — Troops around Iraq got a chance to see it all on Tuesday: Comedy, football and even a good-looking woman.

"Good evening, Balad," comedian Robin Williams yelled to more than 3,000 troops at Balad Air Base, a reprise of his "Good Morning, Vietnam" movie role.

Then Williams was off and running on a stream of consciousness riff that was sometimes obscene, but other times merely profane.

The troops cheered every "I bomb, every indecent innuendo and every naughty gesture from the wound-up comic actor."

They cheered, too, when he spoke of things about which they are familiar, like the C-130 Hercules that brought the show to Anaconda from Baghdad. A good airplane for the deaf, he called it.

"I like when the crew puts on Kevlar and says, 'It's perfectly safe, Mr. Williams,'" he said.

Williams was the star, but he was not the only entertainer. Model Lesann Tweeden, former NFL quarterback John Elway and comedian and actor Blake Clark were on the bill as well. Accompanying them was Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. The group is visiting several locations overseas.

Tweeden, who has visited Iraq twice before on USO tours, acted as emcee for the show. Because of the chilly night air, she was bundled in a heavy coat, to the disappointment of many GIs.

"If I like my coat off, I'll freeze," she said to a crowd that cared little about her comfort.

She thanked the troops for their service before introducing Elway, the Hall of Fame signal caller for the Denver Broncos.



RON JENSEN/Stars and Stripes

Comedian and actor Robin Williams poses with troops at LSA Anaconda, Iraq, after his show Tuesday for the USO. Many troops were able to pose for photos that were placed on the base Web site for downloading.

Elway said he was surprised to get an invitation for the tour. He couldn't sing or dance and wasn't much to look at, he said he told the man on the phone asking him visit American troops.

"He said, 'How's your arm?'" Elway recalled. "I said, 'I can still chuck it,' so look out, guys."

With that, the arm that won two Super Bowls tossed a few dozen footballs into the crowd, even reaching those in the high seats at the outdoor stadium.

"You make me proud to be an American," said Elway. "What you guys do makes what I've done nothing."

Clark, known for roles in movies such as "The Waterboy" and

"The Ladykillers" and the "Home Improvement" television show, led an infantry platoon in Vietnam.

Looking at the lineup of dignitaries that accompanied the show, he said, "Last time I was around this many generals, they made us invade Laos."

His jokes were heavy on satirizing its southern roots. He was born in Georgia and said he had flashbacks while still in Vietnam.

Clark said he has a lot in common with President Clinton.

"We're both from the South. We have the same initials," he said. "But unlike him, I went to Vietnam, and I did inhale."

Before leaving the stage for the headline, Clark turned serious. Speaking as a combat veteran, he said, "Take it from me, years from now... you'll remember this. You didn't read about it in a book. You didn't see it on TV. You lived it. And nobody can take that away from you."

Williams rambled at the speed of an F-16 from one topic to another, stopping on one only long enough to get a laugh or two before rolling on.

When one female soldier shouted out, "I love you, Robin," he said, "There's one lonely woman. If you're attracted to me, you've been here too long."

When a male soldier shouted

Coming to Ramstein

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Kinetic comedian and actor Robin Williams and a slate of other entertainers will appear at Ramstein Air Base's Hangar 1 for a USO show at 8 p.m. Friday.

Along with Williams, former Denver Broncos football star John Elway, model Lesann Tweeden and comedian and actor Blake Clark will appear.

The show is free and open to all Department of Defense ID card holders. Military members are encouraged to wear the uniform of the day.

Friday's show is not considered a family event, as some material might be inappropriate for children, the announcement said. Doors open an hour before show time.

From staff reports

something similar, he said, "You know we can't get married, but we can have a good time."

At the show's end, Williams posed for group pictures, which will be available in a few days on the Web site for the 1st Corps Support Command at www.bragg.army.mil/coscom. Clark joined Williams for the photos while Elway and Tweeden signed scores of autographs.

"I enjoyed it," said Airman Johnathan Roche of the 887th Customs Squadron. "Time well spent." Pfc. Richard Smith of the 502nd Engineer Battalion lived out a fantasy Tuesday night. The longtime Denver Broncos fan got Elway's autograph.

"It's like a dream," he said. "It's something I'll remember the rest of my life."

E-mail Ron Jensen at: jensen@mail.estrpides.osd.mil

Soldiers greeted with warm welcome home in Bamberg

BY RICK EMERT
Stars and Stripes

BAMBERG, Germany — Warner Barracks community members proved that size doesn't matter when it comes to welcoming their heroes home.

About 25 members of the Bamberg military community, including one family, were on hand Wednesday to greet nine soldiers from Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, Division Artillery, 1st Infantry Division as they returned from Iraq.

The soldiers were among the first group of 1st ID support personnel returning to division communities to help prepare for the division's return in February, according to Spc. Rebecca Sharpton, 1st ID spokeswoman.

The soldiers marched into the Bamberg chapel's family life center amid cheers and applause from those gathered to greet them.

"It was nice that, even with this small group, we come home and have the community showing its support," said Master Sgt. Thomas Gruver. "It's very impressive."

Spc. Damien Demasio's family was waiting to greet him.

"The separation has been difficult," Demasio said, clutching his wife, Amber, and children Christian, 3, and Jane, 6 months. "It's been hard on the kids, too, but it helped knowing that my wife had a lot of support back here."

Most of the soldiers who returned Wednesday were single; the families of the married soldiers, other than Demasio, were in the States, according to Maj. Erich Campbell, rear detachment commander for Division Artillery.

The group returned about five days earlier than expected; Campbell learned Tuesday that the soldiers would be back Wednesday.

"We got their rooms ready for them," Campbell said. "They are stocked with some quick foods and drinks. We got linen and made up their beds so they can just flop out [after the welcome ceremony]."

The nine cooks, along with four cooks from 1st Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery who returned Tuesday night, will open up the 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery dining facility to have it ready for 1st Infantry Division soldiers slated to return to Bamberg from Iraq in February.

Gruver said it was nice to be home but



SIMON HUFFER/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Spc. Damien Demasio reunites with his wife, Amber, and children Jane, 6 months, and Christian, 3, on Wednesday at Warner Barracks in Bamberg, Germany. Nine soldiers from Headquarters, Headquarters Battery, Division Artillery, 1st Infantry Division returned to Bamberg from Iraq to open up the 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery dining facility in preparation for the division's return in February.

difficult to leave with others from his unit still in Iraq; the cooks only recently learned that they would be returning early.

"It's hard, because there's still a mission

in Iraq," he said. "It was hard to split with the soldiers who are still there."

E-mail Rick Emert at: emert@mail.estrpides.osd.mil

New system tracks status of wounded troops

BY BEN MURRAY

Stars and Stripes

LANDSTUHL, Germany — Commanders and medical personnel worldwide will soon be able to check the status of patients from Iraq and Afghanistan with little more than a few computer keystrokes.

A new online tool called the Joint Patient Tracking Application allows users "from theater to White House" to get real-time updates on the status of sick and injured troops as they move through the medical system, said Col. Richard Jordan, deputy commander for outlying clinics at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

For sick or wounded troops, the new system means shorter waits for appointments and a smoother transition in and out of medical facilities, Jordan said. Before they even get to the hospital, staff will know

where patients will need a bed, how long they'll stay and even whether they'll need a new uniform when they arrive.

Landstuhl computer experts developed the tracking system to streamline the overburdened Deployed Warrior Medical Management Center, which tracks wounded patients from downrange entering and leaving the Army hospital. The Department of Defense adopted the \$350,000 system military-wide on Nov. 29.

The JPTA updates the hospital's antiquated tracking system, which bowed under the pressure of thousands of new patients from the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

Since Operation Iraqi Freedom started in March last year, Landstuhl doctors have treated 18,214 ill and injured troops from Iraq and 3,130 from Afghanistan, a hospital spokeswoman said.

Already in use by some facilities in Kuwait, the JPTA has proved useful to commanders downrange, according to the program's architect and Landstuhl's chief of information management, Lt. Col. Mike Fravell.

Fravell told the story of a Special Forces commander stationed in Balad, Iraq, who wanted to know if an injured member of his task force would be returning to the unit. He asked the JPTA to find out.

"Within seconds they were able to see where he is, what month he's in and what the extent of his injuries are," Fravell said.

Previously, that kind of search could have taken days or been impossible because patients were being transferred between different facilities and locations, each with its own tracking and processing systems, he said.

Since the war, Landstuhl has moved am-

bulatory patients to area gyms and barracks to ease overcrowding at the hospital. As of this week, more than 100 patients were staying outside of the hospital.

That had made it nearly impossible to keep up updated records on all the troops, Jordan said.

The hospital exhibited a "marked deficiency in our ability to see what was going on with the patients and manage them once they got here," Jordan said. And, the medical management center was able to respond to only about 1 percent of the patient inquiries it received.

"We needed a Web-based application to streamline the business process," Fravell said.

The JPTA is being installed in frontline medical facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan now. Major military medical centers in the States get it next.

E-mail Ben Murray at: Murray@midastripes.osd.mil

Celebrities to send off 155th BCT

JACKSON, Miss. — Singer Wayne Newton, actor Gary Sinise and other celebrities will entertain the 155th Brigade Combat Team at Camp Shelby next week before the soldiers ship out for Iraq.

The team is made up of about 4,000 soldiers from Mississippi, Arkansas and Vermont.

Military leaders and USO officials have planned a concert for Dec. 21.

The soldiers will be given leave after the ceremony and spend Christmas with their families before leaving for Iraq in January.

"I know the soldiers are really looking forward to seeing their family and friends before they leave, and we want to send them off with a really good ceremony," Camp Shelby spokesman Maj. Dorli Sanders said.

From The Associated Press

U.S. Navy pressured to limit ocean sonar use

San Francisco Chronicle

The United States is facing increasing international pressure to place limitations on the use of military sonar, the underwater equivalent of radar that has been linked to mass strandings of whales.

The European Union Parliament — the most prominent of four international bodies that have taken up the matter in recent months — called in October for its member states to develop a moratorium on all types of military sonars, which use powerful sound to locate objects such as submarines.

Two weeks ago, the IUCN-World Conservation Union, a prestigious group of 70 nations and 400 nongovernmental

organizations meeting in Bangkok, overwhelmingly passed a resolution urging governments to limit the use of loud noise sources in the world's oceans, including military sonar. The United States abstained from the vote.

The measure also said that sonar and other activities should be avoided entirely in areas where the vulnerable species live.

The U.S. Navy is the biggest user of mid-frequency active sonar in the world — and government officials have been loath to require permits to regulate its use. "We're not ignoring it by any means," said Bill Hogarth, director of the fisheries division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "But to translate to direct mortality is very difficult."

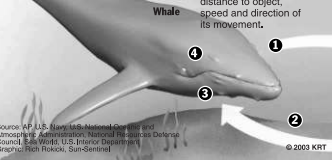
Whales need hearing for survival

Dolphins and whales use their keen hearing and a behavior called echolocation to find mates, search for food and avoid predators in deep or murky water.

Sonar's impact on whales

In March 2000, 16 whales and a dolphin washed up on Bahamas beaches after a Navy sonar exercise; seven of the mammals died. Sound waves, possibly from the sonar, had caused injuries around the whales' eyes and ears.

Sound travels as much as five times faster underwater than in the air.



Source: U.S. Navy, U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Science Foundation, Council, Earthwatch, U.S. Interior Department, Geographic Information System

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Earl McClung



Buck Compton



William "Wild Bill" Guarnere



Darrell "Shifty" Powers



Don Malarkey

'Brothers' pay Hanau troops a visit

By KEVIN DOUGHERTY

Stars and Stripes

HANAU, Germany — A buzz of anticipation ruffled through the crowded gymnasium. In a few minutes, a Band of Brothers six-pack would pop in for a brief visit before heading off for a historic reunion in Bastogne, Belgium.

Darrell "Shifty" Powers looked not the least bit fazed by it all. While his compatriots were off preparing for the grand entrance, Powers stood outside chatting with a few troops and having a last-minute smoke.

Some of the talk centered on the veterans' missing luggage. Heavy fog had delayed their flight into Frankfurt on Tuesday, and when it arrived nearly all of their bags had been left behind in Paris. The 127th Aviation Support Battalion, which hosted Wednesday's visit to Hanau, Germany, stepped up to meet their needs until the lost luggage arrived.

"It's no problem," Powers repeatedly assured the young GIs.

That's typical talk for a member of Easy Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division. War has a way of putting things in proper perspective.

Thursday marks the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. Adolf Hitler's last major offensive of World War II. This weekend in Bastogne, scores of veterans will attend commemorative ceremonies marking the occasion.

Among those on hand will be the six veterans of Easy Company, immortalized in Stephen Am-



Edward "Babe" Heffron

brose's best-selling book "Band of Brothers."

At the invitation of the 127th ASB, based at Fliegerhorst Casern in Hanau, the veterans paid the soldiers a visit that had been months in the making.

It seems that several members of the unit had been in frequent contact with Easy Company vets during their tour in Iraq. In fact, Earl McClung was on the phone with Sgt. 1st Class Billy Maloney one day when Maloney's camp came under fire. McClung stayed on the line during the whole episode.

"I think they are happier to meet us than we are to meet them," Staff Sgt. Scott Fussell of Alpha Company said after Powers walked away to join his compatriots inside.



It was hard to tell. When the six walked into the gymnasium, the place erupted in applause, and continued as the veterans, now in their early 80s, walked through the crowd toward the stage.

"I'd rather be here than back home," William "Wild Bill" Guarnere said to the gym full of GIs. Buck Compton referred to the 1st Armored Division as "a noble unit" that today faces a foe that is "far and away a greater threat [to world peace] than the enemy we fought."

"Your country is for you and proud of you and don't you ever forget it," Compton said, eliciting hearty cheers.

Joining Compton, Guarnere,

Powers and McClung on stage were Edward Heffron and Don Malarkey.

The hour flew by. After brief statements by each of the veterans, the audience members got their chance to ask several questions, which sometimes spawned a side tale or two.

When someone asked Guarnere about the German motorcycle he commandeered, he hesitated for a moment.

"Which motorcycle?" Guarnere inquired as the crowd began to laugh. "Normandy or Holland? There were two motorcycles."

Malarkey chimed in that on joyrides, he "rode in the side car like a general ..." and nobody ever stopped us.

And on and on it went. There were stories and plenty of tributes to today's frontline soldier.

"You are what we were 60 years ago," McClung said.

Deborah Harris asked the veterans for some homefront advice. She said her son, Capt. Eugene Fewell, is on his second tour in Iraq and wondered what tone is the best to strike in her letters from home.

Heffron fielded the question, noting that he and three of his brothers fought in WWII. When they heard of problems back home, they worried a lot.

"Don't give him any bad news," Heffron said. "He's got his own problems."

E-mail Kevin Dougherty at: doughertyk@mil.eetimes.com

Soldiers laugh as William "Wild Bill" Guarnere of "Band of Brothers" fame talks about the "hanky-panky" in London during World War II. The former troops made an appearance in Hanau, Germany, on Wednesday, while on their way to Battle of the Bulge observances.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS Stars and Stripes



PETER JAEGER/Stars and Stripes

The Army veterans in the Band of Brothers will join actor Tom Hanks and others at the 60th anniversary observance of the Battle of the Bulge in Bastogne, Belgium, this week.

Highlights of those events include:

■ **Thursday** — A vigil beginning at 5 p.m. to commemorate the beginning of the battle between German and Allied forces in the Ardennes region, fighting that became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Ceremonies of remembrance will take place at various monuments and sites in Belgium and Luxembourg, including the American Military Cemetery in Hamm, east of Luxembourg City, where more than 5,000 Americans killed during World War II are buried. A ceremony with U.S.

and international officials at Hamm will start at 3 p.m.

■ **Saturday** — Commemoration of the siege of Bastogne, with a historic walk along the Bastogne defensive perimeter. Three self-paced walks — six, 12 and 20 kilometers — will begin from the town square. The walks officially begin at 8 a.m., but walkers can start up to 9:30 a.m. Cost is 3 euros, and walkers can register at the Europa tavern on the town square between 7 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.

Also scheduled is the annual Nuts Fair, once a celebration for farm workers and animal tenders looking to spend the year's wages while also seeking work for the new year. Those who were hired purchased cakes and nuts to give as gifts. The fair's

name also ties in with Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe's famous reply when asked by the Germans to surrender, and the event is now a big party for war re-enactors and others. A sound-and-light re-enactment begins at 5:30 p.m.

■ **Sunday** — Religious ceremony beginning at 10 a.m. honoring war dead at Noville, near Bastogne, and a parade of military vehicles in the afternoon in Bastogne.

■ **Dec. 24** — 60th anniversary midnight Mass at Saint-Pierre Church in Bastogne beginning at 11:30 p.m.

Other events continue through June. For a list and additional information, check the Web site www.bastogne.be/60me/eng/home_eng.htm.

For more about the Battle of the Bulge from the Stars and Stripes archives, go to www.stripes.com/bulge

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IN THE STATES

Bush makes pledge for strong-dollar policy

BY TERENCE HUNT
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush pledged Wednesday to work with Congress to reduce the United States' huge deficits to assure markets that his administration supports a strong dollar.

"The policy of my government is a strong-dollar policy," Bush said during an Oval Office meeting with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

"We're going to take this issue on seriously with the Congress," the president said, after Berlusconi raised concerns about the dollar's fall.

Bush, during a photo opportunity in the Oval Office, noted that in addition to the budget deficit, America suffers from a huge trade deficit.

"That's easy to resolve," Bush said. "People can buy more United States products if they're worried about the trade deficit."

Bush's comments came a day after the government reported that America's trade deficit hit a monthly record of \$55.5 billion in October.

Some economists believe that the administration, while publicly professing support for a strong dollar, actually prefers the decline in the greenback's value against other currencies as a way of dealing with the country's huge trade deficit.

A weaker dollar would make U.S. goods cheaper on foreign markets while making imports more expensive for Americans, thus boosting the fortunes of domestic manufacturers. The country has lost 2.7 million manufacturing jobs over the past three years.

Despite White House expressions of sup-

port, the administration has not taken action to prop up the dollar. During Bush's four years in office, not once has the administration intervened in currency markets to support the dollar or done anything else to stop the dollar's slide.

"We believe that the markets should make the decision about the relationship between the dollar and the euro," Bush said.

The decline in the dollar means that a vacation for Americans in Europe is now more expensive, and European products coming into this country cost more.

Missile test fails

WASHINGTON — An interceptor missile failed to launch early Wednesday in what was to have been the first full flight test of the U.S. national missile defense system in nearly two years.

The Missile Defense Agency has attempted to conduct the test several times this month, but scrubbed each one for a variety of reasons, including various weather problems.

An announcement said the intercepter experienced an automatic shutdown "due to an unknown anomaly."

Sprint buys Nextel

NEW YORK — Telecommunications giant Sprint Corp. is acquiring Nextel Communications Inc. in a \$35 billion deal that would create the nation's third largest wireless telephone service provider.

The transaction, announced Wednesday, would create a company called Sprint Nextel with about \$4 billion in combined yearly revenue and more than 35 million wireless subscribers, trailing only Cingular Wireless and Verizon Wireless.

Sprint would get access to Nextel's 15.3 million subscribers, many of whom are business customers, and Nextel would avoid a costly upgrade of its own network. The companies estimated the merger would save them \$12 billion in operating costs and network upgrades.

Anthrax attack study

NEW YORK — Giving a new generation anthrax vaccine along with antibiotics in response to a terrorist attack wouldn't prevent much disease, but it could help by letting people take the medicines for a briefer time, a U.S. study suggests.

In fact, it would make more sense to use an anthrax vaccine after an attack than to try to carry out mass vaccination beforehand, said Ron Brookmeyer of Johns Hopkins University, lead author of the study.

That's because it would be difficult to vaccinate enough people before an attack to equal the protection conferred by a speedy response to anthrax from a combination of antibiotics and vaccines, he said.

The computerized analysis of the role of an anthrax vaccine is presented in Thursday's issue of the journal *Nature*.

From The Associated Press

U.S. Justice Department urged to open investigation into leaks of spy project

BY TED BRIDIS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Justice Department is considering a request to investigate the disclosure of secrets about an expensive American spy satellite project criticized by some senior Democratic senators, a law enforcement official says.

The formal request for a leaks investigation would target people who described sensitive details about a new generation of spy satellites to The Washington Post, which published a page-one story about the controversial espionage program on Saturday, said this official, speaking Tuesday on condition of anonymity.

The Justice Department has not yet determined whether classified information was leaked and has not decided whether to investigate, the official said.

The request came from an unspecified intelligence agency.

Under Justice guidelines, prosecutors review such requests to ensure they meet strict requirements — such as whether the information was properly classified — before launching a criminal investigation. They also ask the requesting agency for a list of everyone with authorized access to the information and whether the agency is willing to disclose enough information to support a criminal trial.

The Washington Post's executive editor, Leonard Downie, said the newspaper does not discuss its sources.

Disclosures about the project emerged after stinging criticism of its cost and effectiveness last week from Sen. Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, the senior Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, and three other senators on the panel.

Rockefeller complained that the program — which he declined to describe in detail — was expensive, unjustified and wasteful, and he pledged to keep trying to kill it.

The program is aimed at making surveillance satellites difficult to detect and uses new technology to reduce their size, among other means, said one official familiar with the program, who also spoke on condition of anonymity. Under way for nearly a decade, the project is aimed at producing fully capable spy satellites that could fit in a car trunk, this official said.

Rockefeller complained the program was "stunningly expensive."

The Post reported Saturday its projected cost has nearly doubled from \$5 billion to nearly \$9.5 billion.

The National Reconnaissance Office, which designs, builds and operates a constellation of U.S. spy satellites, declined to comment.

Rockefeller and the other Democrats — Sens. Richard Durbin of Illinois, Carl Levin of Michigan and Ron Wyden of Oregon — all refused last week to sign a compromise bill that was part of Congress' new blueprint for U.S. intelligence spending. The Senate nevertheless voted to send the program to President Bush for approval.

The Senate Ethics Committee might be asked to determine whether Rockefeller, Wyden and Durbin disclosed any sensitive information and should face sanctions, a congressional aide said. Intelligence Committee rules prohibit members from disclosing intelligence information or discussing what happened in closed, executive sessions.

Ridge: Color-coded terror warnings get review

BY ELLIOT SPAGAT
The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Outgoing Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said Tuesday that the government should reconsider how it warns people about security threats, conceding that its color-coded scale has invited "questions and even occasional derision."

Ridge's remarks came at a meeting of the Homeland Security Advisory Council — created to advise the secretary on how to run the sprawling new department.

Ridge, who plans to step down after President Bush names a successor, defended the color-coded warnings, but said the public may want more specifics when the threat level is changed.

"I think the system is here to stay," he told reporters. "I just think that we need clearly to take a look at what kind of information do we need to give to the public."

The warning system assigns red, orange, yellow, blue and green, in descending order of risk, but it has sowed confusion since being adopted in 2002.

Bruce Lawlor, who stepped down as Ridge's chief of staff last year, said the color scale suffers "credibility issues" and may have outlived its purpose.

"I think we need to step back and say, 'Do we really need to rely on colors?'" said Lawlor, a retired Army major general.

Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who participated by phone, chided the federal government for giving sometimes-confusing signals about terrorist threats to state and local officials.

Information comes from Homeland Security, Defense and other departments — and it is not always in sync.

"It's like the fire hydrant has been opened," Romney said.

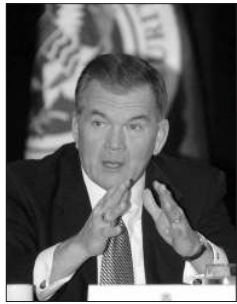
Ridge agreed, saying his department should be a leading contender to be the single funnel of information on domestic threats.

"Whether or not we win the turf war, who knows?" he said.

Bush still must name a new head of the Homeland Security Department to take the place of Bernard Kerik, who abruptly withdrew Friday night. Kerik cited an immigration problem with a nanny he employed, but a series of news reports about possible personal and professional improprieties have emerged in recent days.

"I don't think there's any impact at all on the department," Ridge told reporters. "Frankly, I just think it's a blip on the screen."

Twenty-two disparate federal agencies with more than 180,000 employees and a combined budget of \$36 billion were merged in March 2003 to form the Homeland Security Department.



Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge speaks Tuesday at the opening of a meeting of the Homeland Security Advisory Council in San Diego. He said the department's color-coded terror scale will be reviewed.

Fed nudges interest rates by quarter point

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Federal Reserve on Tuesday raised interest rates for the fifth time since June and signaled it was likely to keep pushing them higher at a "measured" pace in the new year.

The latest quarter-point increase raised the federal funds rate, the interest that banks charge each other, to 2.25 percent, more than double the 46-year low of 1 percent in effect

when the Fed kicked off its credit-tightening campaign six months ago.

The increases have been designed to back off slowly from the exceptionally low interest rates the central bank had put in place over the previous three years as it battled a bursting stock market bubble, a recession and the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Responding to the latest increase, commercial banks quickly moved to boost their prime lending rate, the benchmark for

millions of consumer loans and business loans, by a quarter-point to 5.25 percent.

The Fed's action — and comments — bolstered confidence on Wall Street and pushed stock prices higher. The Standard & Poor's 500 and the technology-heavy Nasdaq index both closed at their highest levels since before the 2001 terrorist attacks. The Dow Jones industrial average was up as well, rising 38.13 points to finish the day at 10,676.45, the Dow's best close since last March.

Economists give Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and his colleagues high marks for navigating the tricky transition away from an extremely easy money policy that had been in effect for an extended period without causing the financial upheavals that have happened in the past.

Greenspan joked recently that "rising interest rates have been advertised for so long and in so many places that anyone who hasn't appropriately hedged his

position by now obviously is desirous of losing money."

In its latest action, the Fed repeated its pledge that with inflation pressures remaining low, the central bank should be able to keep raising rates at a "measured" pace.

That could translate into further quarter-point rate hikes through the first half of next year until the central bank decides it has reached a "neutral" level for monetary policy in which rates are neither stimulating economic growth nor acting as a drag on growth.

Stars, fans mourn 'Dimebag' Darrell at service

BY BOBBY ROSS JR.
The Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — The smoke was thick, the music loud. The rum and the bourbon flowed, and so did the tears.

Guitar-shaped funeral wreaths lined the stage as thousands of grieving fans, many wearing concert T-shirts, gathered Tuesday night to remember slain rock star "Dimebag" Darrell Abbott.

"This guy was full of life. He lived and breathed rock 'n' roll," guitarist Eddie Van Halen said in a profanity-laced tribute to his heavy metal friend.

The 38-year-old Abbott — best known as the former guitarist for Pantera — was

shot to death last week in Columbus, Ohio, while performing with his new band, Damageplan. Three others also were killed before police fatally shot 25-year-old gunman Nathan Gale.

The public memorial service followed a private funeral Tuesday that Abbott's friend Jerry Cantrell, a singer in the 1990s rock band Alice in Chains, described as "beautiful."

"Today's really been the start of the healing process," said Cantrell, who performed at the funeral and again at the public service.



Vinnie Paul Abbott

Pictures of a grinning Abbott, his long hair hanging past his shoulders, covered three big screens. Strobe lights pierced through the darkness as speaker after speaker stepped to the stage, remembering how Abbott made playing the guitar look easy and how — as one friend put it — "he always looked at the glass as half full, figuratively and literally."

Van Halen shared the stage with guitarist Zak Wylde, the two downing shots of liquor as they talked about their rock camarade.

Van Halen stuck his cell phone to the microphone and played a voice mail message that Abbott left for him after a concert where both performed.

"I just wanted to give you a ... call to tell you thank you so ... much, man, for the most awesome, uplifting, euphoric, spiritual rock 'n' roll extravaganza ever," Abbott told Van Halen.

The crowd saved its loudest applause for Abbott's brother, drummer Vinnie Paul Abbott, who patted a life-sized cardboard cutout of his brother holding a guitar and encouraged fans as they chanted "Dimebag! Dimebag!"

Abbott, who attended Arlington High School and lived in nearby Dalworthington Gardens, had formed Damageplan with his brother after they left Pantera.



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OPINION

Nation's gratitude to the families of 9/11

BY CHRISTOPHER SHAYS
AND CAROLYN MALONEY

Congress finally passed historic legislation last week to overhaul the nation's intelligence system. Members of the Sept. 11 commission, who spent nearly two years investigating the government's failure to detect that massive terrorist plot, believe the legislation contains the most important reforms the government can enact to prevent future terrorism against the country.

Even so, the bill faced strong opposition, both in public and in the back rooms of Congress. A fierce fight against reform is all but guaranteed in the halls of government whenever changes of such magnitude are sought in Washington. In this battle for reform, however, there was a force greater than the inertia of the status quo.

While many deserve credit for the coming sea change in our intelligence system, including members of the Sept. 11 commission, no one deserves the country's gratitude more than the determined family members of those killed in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

They turned their grief and anger into vehicles for change, and in doing so helped undeniably to make America safer and stronger for generations.

Just imagine for a moment being called "a 9/11 family member." On its own the label is a burden no one would want to carry. These families carried that burden far more than any of us could imagine.

They stood up time and again in public and in the offices of powerful national leaders, conveying their personal loss and their belief that no American family should ever endure a loss like the one they experienced on Sept. 11. They did all this to compel our government to join their fight for a safer America.

While not all family members were involved, and while those who stood up for reform experienced differences over the preferred final version of the legislation, no one can deny the power of their collective voices in keeping this legislation rolling forward.

The Sept. 11 commission, because of the administration's initial opposition to it, would not have been created had it not been for the pressure exerted by 9/11 families. The commission would have been underfunded and denied subpoena power as well, if the families had not intervened. When the bureaucracy sought to deny the information the commission needed, the families again were unafraid to exert pressure on the president and Congress to

do the right thing. When the commission sought an extension to complete its work in a thorough way, the 9/11 families did not rest until those who sought a premature end to the commission backed down.

And finally, after the release of the commission's report and recommendations, these same family members led the effort to make the recommendations the law of our land. When they thought their work was done this past summer, they had to roll up their sleeves again and fight right until the last moment to get it done. As a last effort, many of the 9/11 family members held vigil day after day, at Ground Zero and in cities across the country, as Congress neared the end of its session. For these families, this legislation was about far more than intelligence reform, it was about fighting terrorism on every front, achieving lasting change after suffering unforgettable losses.

We believe this intelligence reform legislation, so crucial to the future safety of the American people, would not have seen the light of day without the tireless effort of the family members who lost loved ones on Sept. 11. The leaders of this tremendous effort deserve recognition: Carol Ashley, mother of Janice Ashley; Kristin Breitweiser, wife of Ronald Breit-



weiser; Patty Casazza, wife of John F. Casazza; Beverly Eckert, wife of Sean Rooney; Mary Fletcher, mother of Bradley James Fletcher; Monica Gabrielle, wife of Richard Gabrielle; Bill Harvey, husband of Sara Manley Harvey; Mindy Kleinberg, wife of Alan Kleinberg; Carrie Lemack, daughter of Andy Larocque; Steve Pash, husband of Lisa J. Raines; Sally Regenhard, mother of Chris-

tian Michael Otto Regenhard; Lorie Van Aukun, wife of Kenneth Van Aukun; and Robin Wiener, sister of Jeffrey Wiener.

We hope we speak for the nation when we express our gratitude, our respect, and our deepest appreciation for the 9/11 families' devotion to our country's safety. Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Conn., and Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., are co-founders of the 9/11 Commission Caucus in the House of Representatives.

Russia can't keep cloak-and-dagger ways under wraps

BY FRED HIATT

The Washington Post

WHASHINGTON Many experts have speculated about why President Vladimir Putin and his narrow circle seem so determined to lead Russia in a self-defeating direction. Explanations range from misplaced imperial nostalgia to personal insecurity and a need for absolute control to an overzealous response to Russians' understandable desire for stability. Increasingly, though, it seems another, perhaps more rational, motive should not be excluded: simple greed.

As to the misrule, there can no longer be much doubt. Russia continues to benefit from high oil prices, the salvation of incompetent rulers all over the world, but on the most fundamental score card — demography — Russia faces catastrophe. Its population is dwindling, in just the first eight months of this year, its population declined by a half-million. The population is forecast to fall from 150 million when the Soviet Union collapsed to 120 million by 2030.

Male death rates in particular have exploded, and life expectancy is lower than it was 40 years ago. AIDS and tuberculosis could make matters far worse, yet Putin pays no attention to these incipient epidemics and not much to the blossoming epidemic of alcoholism.

The stifling of political and civic freedom under Putin is well chronicled. Television is again state-controlled, power is concentrated in the Kremlin, the renamed KGB harasses academics and citizen-advocates.

The regime is beginning to isolate itself internationally, too. At a forum of European and North American nations last week, Russia put itself in the remarkably Cold War position of vetoing a measure supporting Ukrainian democracy that the Ukrainians themselves put forward. Russia's only ally was Europe's only total dictatorship, Belarus.

None of this is remotely in ordinary Russians' interest, nor did it seem inevitable 10 or even five years ago. Then, many Russian leaders understood that they had nothing to fear and much to gain from living in a rule-based society, with democratic neighbors and growing ties to Europe. Reformers in Putin's government believed he wanted to move toward a nation governed by law, not fear or personal whim.

What happened? No doubt deep-seated habits of nationalist thinking, superpower envy and secret-police paranoia have played a role. But so, perhaps, at least among some Kremlin insiders, has the lure of riches — the temptation of property redistribution.

At least it's hard not to entertain such thoughts as the destruction of Yukos Oil Co. unfolds. This was Russia's most-profitable and most-efficient energy company until its chief was put in prison more than 13 months ago. Since then it has been socked with one tax bill after another — the most recent last

week — until its bills to the government for 2001 and 2002 now exceed its revenue for those years, according to its American chief executive, Steven Theodore.

Yet the government shows no interest in negotiating a payment schedule, Theodore says. Instead, it has scheduled an auction of Yukos' core assets for Sunday, with a government-controlled company quite likely the only bidder, at a price as low as one-third of the assets' real worth. It's "illegal expropriation," in Theodore's words.

Some investors hope the gangster tactics will cease once Yukos is gone. But just last week tax authorities sent a \$158 million tax bill to a cell phone company that has been feuding with the telecommunications minister, who allegedly (he denies it) has a financial interest in a competitor. (The tax authorities, at least showing a sense of humor, sent a \$3 million bill to the competing company.)

The government in neighboring Ukraine had been running affairs the same way, sell-

ing off valuable assets to privileged insiders, and democrats there see a connection between Putin's support of Ukraine's government-backed candidate in recent elections and the similarity in economic systems. "What they have created in Russia is state capitalism," says Oleh Rybachuk, chief of staff to reform candidate Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine, and an end to corruption in Ukraine would be "a vital danger" to that system.

The stifling of free press and political opposition in Russia may have been undertaken for other reasons, but it certainly facilitates Yukos-style official thievery. Who now dices objects? And here's the most depressing part: Once a regime becomes hooked on expropriation, no matter how gussied up with legal niceties, it can never voluntarily give up power. ... Even if thievery was not the original goal, the criminal logic consumes all else.

Fred Hiatt is editor of The Post's editorial page.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



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IN THE WORLD

Afghan abduction ends in saying

Body of Turkish engineer is found

BY PAUL ALEXANDER
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The latest abduction of a foreigner in Afghanistan — a Turkish engineer working on a U.S.-sponsored reconstruction project — ended when the kidnappers killed him, apparently so he wouldn't slow them down with police hot on their trail.

Eyup Orel was working for a Serhat, a Turkish subcontractor for U.S.-based The Louis Berger Group, said company vice president Tom Nicastro. An Australian pilot for Berger was killed in February when a man raked his helicopter with AK-47 fire.

Orel was the second Turkish engineer to be killed in the restive Afghan country this year. Security forces found his body during a massive search operation, said Jamil Jumbesh, head of the Interior Ministry's anti-terror division.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Bandits and insurgents from the Taliban and other Islamic extremist groups

operate in the area about 110 miles east of the capital, Kabul, officials said.

President Hamid Karzai condemned the killing, and ordered security agencies "to use any means possible" to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The U.S. Embassy said it was "angered and saddened."

Orel had been shot six or seven times in the head and torso, Kunar provincial police chief Matullah Sofo said, adding that it appeared the kidnappers killed him so they could move faster and let his body high up a mountain as police moved in to try to capture them.

The kidnappers escaped, taking advantage of the rugged, forested terrain, Sofo said.

March, Afghan forces freed two kidnapped Turkish engineers and an Afghan translator in a shootout with that left their two captors dead and two Afghan soldiers injured. Another Turkish engineer and an Afghan soldier were killed during the abduction a week earlier on the road from Kabul to the turbulent south.



A female hostage gets off a hijacked bus as special police forces surround it Wednesday in eastern Athens.

Two hijack bus outside Athens

BY DEREK GATPOULOS

The Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — One of two armed men who hijacked a bus set a Thursday morning deadline for Greek authorities to deliver a ransom of bus and the six remaining hostages, if he did not receive the money.

The hijacker, identified only as Hassan, gave police until 8:00 a.m. and said he would not release any more hostages. A total of 17 passengers were released during the course of the day Wednesday.

Shortly after making his demand, police said shots were fired from the bus in the direction

of police snipers. No injuries were immediately reported.

The hijackers were armed with at least one pump action shotgun, which they were seen firing out of a bus window. It was unclear whether they actually had explosives.

They seized control of the bus, which had 26 people on board, at 5:50 a.m. about 10 miles east of the city center. The bus driver, a ticket inspector and a passenger escaped almost immediately.

Police praised the driver's quick action, which immobilized the bus and gave authorities control over the situation.

The hijackers initially demanded a new bus driver, saying they wanted to be taken to the airport and flown to Russia.

Sources in the Athens prosecutor's office said both men were Albanians with criminal records in Greece, and speculated they tried to hide their identities by pretending to be of a different nationality.

As night fell, police snipers moved closer to the bus, which was hemmed in by a police car and a van next to a large supermarket.

The two hijackers had not asked for food or water since they took control of the intercity bus at a stop in the Athens suburb of Geraka just before dawn.

Egypt reviving Mideast peace plan

BY SUSAN SEVAREID

The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — Egypt is generating new hope for Mideast peace after four bleak years, transforming Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon from pariah to peacemaker and seeking to draw Arab leaders and a wary public into its efforts.

The peace drive has included appeals to Arab rulers to support the new Palestinian leadership and an economic deal Tuesday that is arguably the biggest step in Israeli-Egyptian relations in 25 years.

Egypt appears determined to

show Israel and President Bush, who has said a Palestinian state by 2009 is realistic, that the matter can be settled in 2005.

Egypt's plan is to follow an old one — the internationally backed "road map" for peace — and every step holds the potential for a set-back, though it is making fresh commitments to lessen risks.

"We are trying to prepare the atmosphere [so] that the two parties can sit down and start to talk," said Mohammed Bassiouni, Egypt's former ambassador to Israel, who insists Egypt's goals are realistic.

Egypt's diplomatic efforts en-

vision, according to Bassiouni, a March meeting in Cairo with representatives of all Palestinian factions to sign on to a protocol laying out their roles after a planned Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

A British-proposed international peace conference early in the year could lay out provisional borders for a Palestinian state, and Bassiouni said a second conference could be held around July for a final settlement.

But Egypt has a lot of persuading to do.

Neither the Israelis nor the Americans have embraced the Israeli proposal. Saudi Arabia, the other Arab heavyweight, also has sounded reserved.

Australia plans security zone

SYDNEY, Australia — Australia plans to enforce a maritime security zone more than 1,100 miles out to sea, far beyond its territorial waters, in a move to boost defenses against possible terror attacks on its soil and offshore oil and gas facilities, Prime Minister John Howard said Wednesday.

Under the new plan — due to begin in March — all vessels will be required to present information to defense and customs authorities, Howard said.

World court rules for NATO nations

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The International court of Justice on Wednesday ruled that it has no jurisdiction in claims filed by Serbia and Montenegro against eight NATO countries for the 1999 bombing in Kosovo, because the Balkan nation was not then a member of the United Nations.

The former Yugoslavia claimed NATO countries that took part in the bombing campaign violated international law, and sought unspecified damages.

At least 5 dead in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Heavy floods and landslides across Sri Lanka have killed at least five people and forced the evacuation of around 133,000 people, an official and news reports said Wednesday.

The government has launched relief efforts to provide food and shelter to those affected.

Shooting breaks out in Haiti slum

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Shootouts erupted between residents of a slum outside Haiti's capital and U.N. troops after hundreds of international peacekeepers attempted to control flashpoints of violence.

At least four people were killed in separate incidents Tuesday, with six people being shot in the Cite Soleil slum, including a 26-year-old woman, a 16-year-old boy and a 13-year-old boy.

From The Associated Press

Defense in USS Cole case demands retrial

BY AHMED AL-HAJ

The Associated Press

SAN A, Yemen — Defense lawyers in the appeals trial of six men convicted in the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole demanded a retrial Wednesday, saying investigation and procedures in the first trial were tarnished with errors.

The defense, in a 30-page memorandum, said procedures in the initial investigation were illegal and that the court was biased and refused to accept evidence submitted by the defense.

"The prosecutors did not have any firm evidence to prove the involvement of the defendants in the attack," the defense said.

The U.S. Embassy in Sana'a sent two representatives to attend the trial, which was adjourned until Dec. 29.

The first convictions in the al-Qaida attack were handed down in September, with four Yemenis sentenced to five to 10 years in prison. Two men — Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, a Saudi suspected of being an associate of Osama bin Laden, and Yemeni militant Jamal al-Badawi — were sentenced to death.

Al-Nashiri, who is believed to have masterminded the Cole attack and thought to have directed the 1998 bombings at the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, was the only defendant not

present during the trial. He is in U.S. custody at an undisclosed location.

Two suicide bombers rammed an explosives-laden boat into USS Cole destroyer as it refueled in the southern Yemeni port city of Aden on Oct. 12, 2000, killing 17 American sailors and injuring 37 others.

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Swedish bomb scare

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Part of the Swedish capital was sealed off Wednesday morning after a bomb scare that police said was linked to an attempt to extort money from an employee of a currency exchange office.

An area around downtown Stockholm's Hoetorget square was evacuated, and a bomb squad removed the package shortly before noon, said Kjell Lindgren, a police spokesman. It was not immediately clear whether it contained any explosives.

Kyoto Protocol warning

ROME — Italy's environment minister warned that if the United States, China and India don't join the Kyoto Protocol, the world will have to rely on bilateral accords and voluntary efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reports said Wednesday.

Italy's minister ratified the Kyoto Protocol and hosted the climate change conference in Milan last year. The Kyoto Protocol was given a boost when Russia signed up last month, under pressure from the EU.

Afghan drugs in Russia

MOSCOW — A rising tide of drugs from Afghanistan has swept Russia, triggering a steady increase in the number of drug-related crimes, officials told parliament Wednesday.

According to experts' estimates, about 4 million of Russia's 144 million people are drug addicts, Russia's Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev said. Alexander Pyodov, the acting chief of Russia's drug agency, said that nearly all heroin flowing to Russia comes from Afghanistan, which has seen a steady rise in drug production.

Congested air travel

BRUSSELS, Belgium — European air travelers face severe congestion problems by 2025 if air travel continues to expand at the current rate, according to a report released Tuesday.

It said demand for air travel is expected to more than double by 2025, meaning "a potential 3.7 million flights per year will not be accommodated, even if the capacity of the airport network increases by 60 percent."

From wire reports

Indonesian terror attack possible

Australia: Intelligence indicates Hilton hotel may be target

BY MIKE CORDER
The Associated Press

SYDNEY, Australia — Terrorists are ready to carry out an attack in Indonesia, possibly targeting a Hilton hotel, Australia said Wednesday, on the eve of a two-day visit to Jakarta by the country's defense minister.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued a statement saying it had "received credible new information suggesting terrorists are ready to carry out an attack shortly in Indonesia, possibly targeting a Hilton hotel," adding "other targets cannot be ruled out."

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, speaking in Papua New

Guinea where he was attending a conference, said the attack could be on a Hilton or another western hotel and urged Australians to keep away from them.

The government statement did not elaborate on where the information came from and Pranowo Dahlan, head of Indonesia's anti terror unit, said he was unaware of the new warning.

Downer said: "This is credible information from intelligence. We wouldn't be passing it on if we weren't particularly concerned about the information."

The Hilton hotel chain has three hotels in Indonesia: in the capital, Jakarta; on the tourist island of Bali; and in the industrial city of Surabaya on Java island.

"We have not received any warning from the police or the Australian embassy," said Shakra Tamayanti, the public relations manager at the Hilton Jakarta.

She said security at Hilton hotels in Indonesia had been boosted since the 2002 terror bombings on Bali island that killed 202 people, including 88 Australians.

Canberra warned Australians in Indonesia to avoid all international hotels and other places where foreigners gather.

It also again advised Australians to defer all nonessential travel to Indonesia, while Australians already there who fear for their safety should consider leaving the country.

Australian Defense Minister Robert Hill was due to arrive in Jakarta on Thursday for a two-day trip. His visit was going ahead as planned.

"In the lead-up to the Christmas and New Year holiday period, we continue to receive reports that terrorists in the region are planning attacks against a range of targets," the foreign ministry said in a travel advisory for Indonesia.

"Terrorist attacks could occur at any time, anywhere in Indonesia and could be directed against any locations known to be frequented by foreigners," it warned.

On Sept. 9, terrorists attacked Australia's embassy in Jakarta, killing 10 people.

Decoration to stay at U.S. mission in Cuba

Americans say Cubans don't like Christmas lights referring to 75 jailed dissidents

BY VANESSA ARRINGTON
The Associated Press

HAVANA — The Cuban government has warned the U.S. diplomatic mission in Havana to immediately take down Christmas decorations outside its offices or face unspecified consequences, the top American diplomat on the island said Tuesday.

The trimmings of Santa Claus, candy canes and white lights wrapped in palm trees on the mission's seaside lawn aren't the problem.

What was likely irking the Cuban authorities, U.S. Interest Section Chief James Cason said, is a lighted sign about 3 feet in diameter among the decorations that reads "75" — a reference to 75 Cuban dissidents jailed last year.

The sign was among the decorations closest to Havana's coastal Malecon highway.

"Our intent, in the spirit of Christmas, was to call attention to the plight of these 75," Cason told reporters. "We're prepared to pay whatever price for the things we believe in."

In meetings Saturday and Tuesday, Cuban Foreign Ministry officials insisted the decorations be taken down, Cason said. The U.S. Interest Section refused, and was told it would face unspecified consequences.

"They could expel us, they could continue

to hinder our activities," Cason said. "We don't know what they're going to do."

U.S. relations, never good during Fidel Castro's four decades of communist rule, have deteriorated under the Bush administration, which has toughened economic sanctions and publicized its plan for a democratic Cuba after the death of the 78-year-old leader.

The United States and Cuba have not had diplomatic relations since shortly after Castro took over. In lieu of embassies, interest sections provide consular services and limited official contact.

The dissidents imprisoned last year were accused of receiving money from U.S. officials to undermine the island's system — a charge the activists and the U.S. government denied.

They were sentenced to up to 28 years in prison, but 14 have been released for medical reasons.

Cason said the Cuban government was annoyed by an event at the mission for relatives of political prisoners and a Christmas party held for their children. He said state security officers outside his house intimidated the children as they arrived to the party.

"Our position is that our Christmas decorations are up through Christmas," he said. "It's a matter of principle to us."



James Cason, head of the U.S. Interest Section in Havana, Cuba, speaks Tuesday of the Cuban government's complaint about the inclusion of lights relating to the 75 Cuban jailed dissidents among the Christmas decorations outside the U.S. mission's offices.

LOOK FOR
HOLIDAY GREETINGS
FROM FOLKS BACK HOME

in your December 16th
STARS AND STRIPES Middle East edition

STARS AND STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper



Less 'Heart'

AL MONTGOMERY — The state slogan "Heart of Dixie," a source of pride to some and embarrassment to others, is disappearing from more Alabama license plates every year.

One-third of the groups that promote distinctive and collegiate license plates now choose to leave the slogan off their tags.

The standard state license plate still has "Heart of Dixie," as required by state law, but it's reduced to letters one-sixteenth of an inch high, printed on a bottom corner.

Former Gov. Don Siegelman, who approved that design, said he wanted it to foster positive images at a time when Alabama was trying to recruit international corporations.

Gas station shooting

MA MEDFORD — A gas station attendant in Medford pulled his own gun on two would-be robbers, shooting and wounding one of the suspects, police said. The second suspect got away.

"It looked like self-defense," Medford police Lt. Paul Covino said of the incident at Fred's Gas Auto Service on Mystic Avenue. He said the gun was registered to the attendant, who was licensed to carry a firearm.

No charges have been filed against the attendant, who was not identified. Police said he fired seven or eight shots at the suspects.

Unconfirmed alcohol

LA GREYNA — Traces of alcohol were detected in the suspected "Jell-O shots" taken to school by a fourth grader — leading to her suspension — but it could have been the result of natural fermentation, a school official said.

School board president Gene Katsanis said the gelatin cannot be retested because it was not refrigerated after being discovered in the student's book bag, Katsanis said. "It will always remain a mystery," he said.

Artifacts wash up

DE LEWES — Visitors to a newly rebuilt beach near Roosevelt Inlet have been finding hundreds of artifacts that could be more than 300 years old. The items were dredged from the bottom of the Delaware Bay. It's not known if the artifacts were from a shipwreck or an early colonial settlement submerged by erosion.

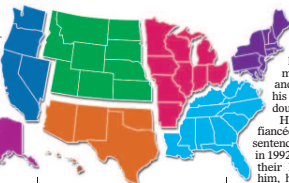
Can't find the birds

HI OLINDA — Bad weather on Maui has prevented wildlife experts from spotting what they believe are the last two po'ouli birds on earth.

The quest to save the rare birds took on new urgency last month with the death of a male bird captured for breeding.

There are believed to be two remaining birds in the wild, but 10 straight days of rain in the Hanawi Natural Area Reserve have hindered scientists' efforts to locate them.

The po'ouli is part of the Hawaiian honeycreeper family and is so unique it has its own genus. It was



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

not discovered until 1973, when a group of University of Hawaii students conducting research on the east slope of Haleakala volcano sighted a bird they had never seen before.

The small, stocky, brown bird has a partial black face described as a bandit's mask.

Targeting drunken drivers

LA BATON ROUGE — The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission will provide \$500,000 to pay for overtime for patrols dedicated to getting drunken drivers off the roads during the holidays. Since 1999, an average of 25 people have been killed in Louisiana highway crashes over the holidays every year. Commission official James Champagne said almost half of the New Year's fatalities and one-third of the Christmas fatalities were alcohol-related.

Freed after 12 years

TX FORT WORTH — Texas officials freed a man who spent 12 years in prison after he was wrongfully convicted of molesting a 3-year-old girl.

John Michael Harvey, 40, was released after the state Court of Criminal Appeals ruled 5-4 there was not enough evidence to convict him after his alleged victim recanted more than a decade after he was jailed. Prosecutors have said

they do not plan to seek a new trial.

Harvey missed a lot during 12 years behind bars, including marrying his girlfriend and spending time with his parents, none of whom doubted his innocence.

His relationship with his fiancée fell apart after he was sentenced to 40 years in prison in 1992. After draining most of their life savings to defend him, his father died in 2000 and his mother passed away two years later.

Harvey's nightmare started in 1989, when he returned from a trip and learned police had searched his Bedford apartment. When he went to find out why, authorities arrested him for sexual assault of a child.

He said he was offered a plea deal, but he did not want to admit to something he did not do. "If you're guilty, you're worried. Being innocent, I wasn't concerned," Harvey said.

Rooftop crash

CA LOS ANGELES — A small helicopter crashed on the roof of a downtown skyscraper while trying to make an emergency landing, authorities said.

Two men aboard the privately owned aircraft were uninjured in the 10 a.m. crash. The cause remained under investigation.

The two-seat Robinson R-22 was badly damaged when it crashed next to the helipad atop the 54-story Wells Fargo building, city Fire Department spokesman Brian Humphrey said.

There was no fire, and no debris fell from the building, Humphrey said. The National Transportation Safety Board was investigating.

Bush photos controversy

PA LANCASTER — A Democratic city councilman is demanding that a baker remove photos of President Bush from his stand in Lancaster's farmers market, saying the city needs a "healing period" following the bitterly contested election.

City Councilman Nelson Polite asked baker David Stoltzfus last month to remove the pictures. When Stoltzfus refused, Polite threatened to try to enact a city ordinance that would ban all political material from public places.

"I just felt that since it was a close election and the city's so divided, that we should have a healing period," Polite told the New Era of Lancaster.

Republican Mayor Charlie Smithgall said potential visitors have told him they will skip the old city in the heart of Amish country because of Polite's statements.

DNA helps rape cases

VA NORFOLK — DNA test results that freed two men imprisoned for rapes they did not commit implicate a convicted rapist already serving three life terms for a 1984 rape.

Aaron Dossie III probably committed the rapes for which Arthur Lee Whitfield and Julius Earl Ruffin served a total of 43 years before being cleared. Commonwealth Attorney John R. Doyle III said.

Doyle said Dossie will not be prosecuted for the rapes because in both cases key witnesses have died.

Whitfield and Ruffin were convicted of rapes in Norfolk that occurred in 1981.



High-flyin' trick

Denny Howard of Carson City, Nev., performs a "Nolley Hand Flip" at the Mills Park skateboard park in Carson City.



Reflecting on school

Candidates for masters and doctorate degrees are reflected in a hallway mirror while preparing for fall commencement at Washington State University in Pullman, Wash.



Emu on the loose

Topeka police officers and Shawnee County sheriff's deputies try to catch an emu as it dashes across traffic at an intersection in Topeka, Kan. Unable to find the emu's owner, authorities found it a new home.



Making it festive?

A skeleton in a Santa hat tries to set a holiday mood in the orthopedic-neurologic unit at the Benefits Healthcare hospital in Great Falls, Mont.



Bordering a touchdown

U.S. Border Patrol agent Mark Bazil, center, runs past his blocker, agent Rick Sanchez, left, as he is chased by Alamogordo Department of Public Safety officer Richard Luna, right, during the annual Liniment Bowl at Griggs Complex in Alamogordo, N.M.



Skiing Santa Claus

Santa water skis on the Coosa River in Wetumpka, Ala., for the town's annual Christmas on the Coosa festival.

Botulism mystery

FL TALLAHASSEE — Tests to determine the source of the botulism toxin that left four people hospitalized were inconclusive, and it was unclear whether a cosmetic injection caused the paralyzing, potentially fatal illness, officials said.

Investigators suspect the four people, two in New Jersey and two in South Florida, may have been injected with the toxin for cosmetic reasons. All have been hospitalized since the Thanksgiving weekend.

Tests conducted at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta detected botulism toxin type A in blood from three individuals. Specimens were not available for the fourth person.

Florida Health Secretary John Agnew noted that the toxin also causes the type of botulism that comes from eating contaminated foods or from having a wound contaminated.

Alcohol-related death

CO DENVER — Colorado State University officials said a 20-year-old student whose body was found appears to be the latest in a string of alcohol-related deaths involving Colorado students this fall.

Bennett Bertoli's body was found in a house across the street from where he lived near the Fort Collins campus.

Police said they were called after attempts to wake him were unsuccessful.

Police have not released the cause of Bertoli's death, but Anne Hudgens, executive director of campus life, told the Fort Collins Coloradoan that it appeared to be alcohol-related. Police did not say where Bertoli had been the night before or how he ended up in the house.

Ex-con won't teach

NY CLINTON — A former leftist radical who spent 16 years in prison for possessing explosives has withdrawn from teaching a college seminar after her hiring sparked protests. Susan Rosenberg made her decision because it was in the best interest of all parties, Hamilton College officials said.

In response to her hiring, prospective students withdrew applications and donors rescinded hundreds of thousands of dollars in pledges, school officials said.

Rosenberg, who earned a master's degree in creative writing while in prison, was to teach a one-month course in January called "Resistance Memoirs: Writing, Identity and Change." She was hired through an on-campus organization that focuses on social justice issues.

Algae researched

FL MARCO ISLAND — Scientists are tracking a 400-square-mile bloom of red tide algae lurking off the Gulf Coast, pointing to it as the likely cause of a mass fish kill and several dolphin deaths at the tip of the Florida peninsula.

"It looks almost the size of a small state. It really is a large area of bloom," said Billy Causey, superintendent of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. "I'd have to say that this is the largest red

tide bloom that I have ever seen." A red tide is considered a higher-than-normal concentration of a plant-like microscopic algae. The species that usually contaminates the water during Florida Gulf Coast red tides is called *Karenia brevis*, which produces a toxin that can affect a fish's central nervous system.

Nude Statehouse lamp

VT MONTPELIER — Gov. James Douglas is doing some tidying up in his office and one thing he thinks can go is a table lamp that sometimes makes him red-faced.

The lamp, installed on his desk recently as part of a Statehouse restoration project, is a replica of a famous 19th century nude statue that cost \$2,500 and is plugged into an overhead chandelier.

"The governor does not object to the art," said Douglas spokesman Jason Gibbs. "It may, frankly, be awkward to explain why there is a nude Greek slave on the governor's desk to a third grader."

The lamp is a replica of "The Greek Slave" — a chained female slave crafted by a Vermont artist in 1843.

Machete attack

TX TEXAS CITY — Police are looking for a man accused of attacking a woman with a machete, severing one of her fingers.

Rachael Ornelas was in stable condition at the University of Texas Medical Branch following surgery.

The 42-year-old woman had called emergency dispatchers, pleading for help, detective Brian Goetschius of the Texas City Police Department said. Emergency medical service workers and police found her covered in blood at her apartment.

Police recovered a large machete and issued a warrant for the arrest of a 40-year-old man.

New take on remedy

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Combating malaria has been one of the primary goals of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and its latest gift of \$42.6 million will fund a nonprofit drug company's high-tech take on an ancient Chinese remedy.

Working with a biotechnology company, the San Francisco-based Institute for OneWorld Health will try to turn the genetic engineering efforts of Jay Keasling of the University of California, Berkeley into an inexpensive and effective drug to fight malaria in the third world.

Keasling is developing a new way to manufacture artemisinin, which is made from finely ground wormwood plants. Chinese first extracted artemisinin from the sweet wormwood for medicinal use more than 2,000 years ago.

Search for GOP leader

IL SPRINGFIELD — Illinois Republicans are searching for a new head of their party after GOP chairwoman Judy Baar Topinka gave them until Jan. 31 to find her replacement. Within the party, fierce ideological bickering has driven a wedge between conservatives and moderates. Democrats control both houses of the Legislature, the governor's mansion and the state Supreme Court. Stories and photos from wire services



Chorale cheer

The Appleton Boychoir performs A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols at Lawrence Memorial Chapel in Appleton, Wis.

FACES

Carlton blazes own path to musical glory

BY NERESA MUMBI MOODY

The Associated Press

IT'S hard to imagine a more pop debut than Vanessa Carlton's.

Her piano-infused "A Thousand Miles" became an anthem of 2002, garnered her three Grammy nominations and helped her sell more than 2 million copies of "Be Not Nobody," her first album. But as she releases her sophomore set, "Harmonium," Carlton prefers to define herself as out of the mainstream.

"I am kind of an alternative to kind of the very popular hip-hop stuff and other really mainstream pop artists," says the 24-year-old singer-songwriter, sitting in a studio at New York's famed Hits Factory. "I'm an alternative to the Simpson girls."

Carlton has done well by defining herself as the alternative to commercialized pop; with her first album, the brunette was cast as one of the emerging anti-Britneys — female artists who wrote their own material, playing their own instruments and rejected the role of pop's oversized victim.

Carlton hopes to cast herself next as a career artist, instead of the hot singer of the moment.

Q: You were among a rising group of female singer-songwriters considered an alternative to Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. Do you feel you were lumped in with other artists?

A: I did, but I thought that the trend of that time probably helped propel me forward.

When you're part of a trend, it tends to be easier to kind of break through, and at this point now I'm just kind of standing on my own and it feels nice to be one of the few people that are doing what I am attempting to do.

I'm not really scared by it at all. To walk the bold path is not something that I'm afraid of, and if I'm releasing a song to radio and it's the only song on radio that sounds that way, that to me is a plus as opposed to me being concerned that I'm not fitting a preconceived mold.

Q: You say this record is more serious — why?

A: It's a darker-themed album. (When you're a writer and you're 16 and 17 years old, you kind of like go through a diary stage where you're kind of mostly narcissistic and dealing with yourself, and writing



Singer Vanessa Carlton poses at the Hit Factory music studios in New York.

for me is a very selfish thing, where as it's solely about comforting myself.

And just as you grow up, you kind of start to absorb your environment in a different way, you develop a different perspective.

Q: What was the whirlwind like when you were nominated for the Grammys?

A: It kind of went over my head. ... It was

almost too easy.

I was working for years and suddenly it came, and as much as someone could say, "You worked for four years, five years, and it all comes and it feels so good" — it's all going at such a fast pace that it doesn't feel easy, it just feels like it's whipping through your fingers as it's happening and there's no real way to absorb it or appreciate it,

and that was really what was happening.

Now I don't think it would be like that. (But) the Grammys to me was dealing with the battery pack strapped around my leg, making sure I could hear my vocal and the piano at the same time.

Q: Did you enjoy it?

A: Being at the actual Grammys? No. I enjoyed the attention ... but it's one of the most stressful awards. I couldn't even get a cup of water backstage.

Q: Do you think this album is more of a mature record?

A: I think the album is a reflection of a more womanly point of view on the world. There was something kind of innocent and girlish about the first record ... But with that said, I tend to have a very wholesome image. I don't really strip or do anything like that.

Q: You haven't done the Maxim layout?

A: (laughs) No, and I don't have a desire to, because the bottom line is I feel womanly and sexy and confident. ... I feel like taking off all of your clothes [is] doing it to get attention from men, and I don't feel like I need to fight for it.

I feel sexy in pajamas. I think as a woman growing up in this society, it's really easy, dangerously easy, to kind of fall into the trappings of what your image should be, how you should look.

The expectation for women has gotten about out of hand. I try to separate myself from the whole thing.

Q: How do you not fall into that? So many women have vowed to never do it, and then a few months later they're showing skin.

A: Well, I think that I'm perfectly happy that my brain is bigger than my boobs, and that's quite all right with me.

There's a pressure to stay thin and pretty, but I don't feel a pressure to be naked or get a boob job or anything like that. I'm sure I would sell more records ... but I couldn't care less. I have friends and family and a boyfriend and I don't have to prove myself to anyone.

And with that said, I definitely have one of the better (behinds) in the music industry, and no one will see it because I'm sitting at the piano!

Elton John nixes concert due to infection

Singer Elton John canceled a second British concert because of a throat infection.

John, 57, blamed the infection for the cancellation of his planned show Sunday at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow — the fourth concert in a tour of Britain. Two nights earlier, he had canceled a concert in Nottingham.

"I've been doing all that I can to try to get my voice back and I've seen a throat specialist again today and he's advised that it would be foolish to go ahead with tonight's show," John said in a statement.

Earlier this month, the rock legend was honored with a star-studded tribute at the Kennedy Center.

Bob Marley for Jamaican national hero

He's received countless musical accolades, inspired millions with his message of "one love" and is even hailed as a prophet by some.

Now, members of Bob Marley's estate are lobbying the

government to proclaim the dreadlocked reggae singer a national hero, Jamaica's highest honor. Marley died of cancer in Miami in 1981 at 36, and some of his family members have lived in South Florida.

"Anywhere you go in the world the first thing people think of when they hear Jamaica is Bob Marley," said Jacqueline Knight-Campbell, who is organizing the campaign for the Bob Marley Foundation. "He has inspired so many people with his songs so it's time for us to step up and take Bob's recognition to a higher level."

The foundation is also seeking to have his birthday — Feb. 6 — declared a national holiday.

Only seven Jamaicans have been named national heroes, including black civil rights leader Marcus Garvey and former Prime Minister Alexander Bustamante.

Country singer released from hospital

Veteran country singer Little Jimmy Dickens has been released from a hospital where he was treated for pneumonia.

A Grand Ole Opry spokeswoman said Dickens was dis-

charged after nearly a week and sent home with orders to rest. He will turn 84 Sunday.

His hits include "May the Bird of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose," "A Sleepin' at the Foot of the Bed" and "Out Beyond the Barn."

Famed Navy pilot to move to Nebraska

Navy pilot Shane Osborn, who guided a crippled surveillance plane to a safe landing on Chinese soil in 2001, plans to move to Nebraska this spring.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate said he and his family probably will make their home in Omaha or Lincoln.

Currently, Osborn is stationed at the Naval Discharge Review Board in Washington, D.C. He has served nine years in the Navy.

On April 1, 2001, Osborn was flying over the South China Sea when a Chinese fighter plane got too close to the Navy plane and the jets collided. The plane plunged 7,500 feet before Osborn gained control and landed.

None of the 24 crewmembers was hurt, but they were taken prisoner for 11 days before being released.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



John



Marley



Osborn

YOUR MONEY

Gift cards popular — but they can be tricky

BY EILEEN ALT POWELL

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Publicist Scott Black started looking at purchasing gift cards a couple of years ago, when he realized how much it cost to ship holiday presents to customers and family.

"Whether for a client or my mother-in-law, it seemed silly to spend \$50 on a gift and then \$20 to ship it," said Black, 40, president of the Timepiece Public Relations agency in Dallas.

He's become a big fan of gift cards, which are prepaid cards that look like credit or debit cards that recipients can use to purchase goods or services. Black even sends them to his mother, who is an avid reader.

"I get gift cards to the book stores near her," he said. "For her, the hunt for a new book is as exciting as getting the gift."

The most popular gift cards are sold by retailers, including department stores, restaurants and music shops, for use in their own outlets. Others are available through financial institutions and generally carry the logos of Visa, MasterCard, American Express or Discover. These can be used wherever the branded credit cards are accepted.

Although increasingly popular with American consumers, gift cards are not in their drawbacks.

A study done by the Division of Consumer Affairs in Montgomery County, Md., found that some



Scott Black holds Barnes & Noble and Cheesecake Factory gift cards that he will be giving to friends and family as Christmas gifts. Black started looking seriously at purchasing gift cards a couple of years ago when he realized how much it was costing to ship presents to customers and family for the holidays.

gift card issuers do not offer replacement cards if the originals are lost or stolen.

Many extract "inactivity" or "dormancy" fees if a card isn't used within a year or other set period of time, reducing the value of the card by as much as \$2 a month. Some gift cards, especially bank-issued cards, cost \$3.95 to \$11.95 to buy and expire after a year or 18 months, the study found.

"Consumers should understand a gift card's policies before

they buy," the Maryland agency said.

Despite potential problems, the cards are gaining increasing consumer acceptance because they help make gift-giving easy, said Tara Weiner, national managing partner of consulting firm Deloitte & Touche USA's consumer business industries practice.

"Gift cards are convenient for the giver and convenient for the recipient, who can choose a gift they truly want," Weiner said.

A survey conducted for Deloitte

Before buying ...

The Treasury's Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and a number of state consumer agencies suggest consumers look into the terms and conditions on gift cards before they buy. Some things to look out for:

■ Is there a charge for purchase of the card? Gift cards issued by retailers generally don't have upfront costs, but bank cards that carry the logo of companies such as Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Visa can cost \$3.95 to \$11.95 to buy.

■ Does the card have an expiration date?

■ Are "inactivity" or "dormancy" fees deducted from the value of the gift card if it isn't used in a set period of time?

■ Are replacement cards available if a gift card is lost or stolen? Is there a charge for the replacement?

■ Exactly where can the cards be used? Can they be used on the Internet, or only for in-store purchases?

■ Can the cards be swapped for cash?

—The Associated Press

& Touche found that 64 percent of consumers intend to buy gift cards this holiday season, up from 60 percent in 2003. About half said they would purchase cards for stores or products, some 34 percent intend to buy cards for restaurants and 27 percent expect to buy cards for services.

But the Deloitte & Touche survey also found that more than a quarter of the people who received gift cards during the 2003 holiday season hadn't fully redeemed all of their gift cards a year later.

"You want the gift cards to be fully taken advantage of," Weiner said. "That suggests there's an opportunity for retailers to consider promotions around gift cards" after the holidays.

Ruth Furman, 38, of Las Vegas, used to avoid gift cards because she felt they were impersonal. Now she considers them the best way to make sure her eight nieces and nephews get exactly the gifts they want.

"I go out of my way to find out what they like, where they shop," Furman said. "I want the kids to

get something they're really going to like and they're really going to use."

That translates to Barnes & Noble and Borders gift cards for nieces who like to pick their own books and music, as well as a Toys R Us gift card for a 3-year-old nephew who likes Thomas the Tank Engine toys.

"I try to send the cards with a note, and that helps make it more personal," Furman said.

Still, there are consumers who don't want anything to do with gift cards.

"I just hate them," said Kathy Posner, 49, a retired advertising executive. Instead of putting gifts under the Christmas tree, "we're becoming a nation that puts envelopes under the tree," she said.

Posner said the holiday shops through the year, trying to match gifts to the wants and needs of friends and family.

"Prayer, I would rather have you spend \$10 and give me something you've thought about than spend \$50 and hand me a gift card that says to me, 'I don't have time to think about you,'" she said.

TUESDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES

	52-week High	Low	Net Change	% YTD	52-week Low
Dow Jones Industrial	10,513.45	7,028.40	+18.15	+3.21	+2.41
Dow Jones Transportation	3,146.86	2,743.46	+32.87	+8.26	+24.34
Dow Jones Utilities	352.54	254.11	+6.71	+21.23	+29.29
S&P 500	7,108.83	6,171.85	+22.30	+1.03	+17.78
Amer. Index	1,417.41	1,118.28	+1.58	+3.17	+19.86
Nasdaq Composite	2,185.42	1,750.82	+11.34	+5.37	+21.24
Nasdaq 100	1,138.77	1,049.72	+6.50	+3.19	+23.13
S&P MidCap	548.29	454.29	+1.83	+5.35	+13.16
S&P SmallCap	644.84	515.90	+4.74	+8.56	+15.67
DJ Wilshire 2000	117,379.70	10,598.52	+11,845.23	+4.54	+47.58

NYSE

	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Net Change	% YTD	52-week Low
Lucas	730.50	3.44	-.07	-.07
General	620.40	25.18	+.46	+.46
Price	371.31	19.38	+.40	+.40
First	389.76	27.17	+.17	+.17
Northwest	627.57	31.78	-.08	-.08
General	200.13	18.48	-.39	-.39
Centric	172.48	3.49	-.59	-.59
General	182.77	7.93	-.04	-.04
Cigna	143.09	4.87	+.31	+.31
Chgo	447.11	1.37	-.33	-.33

AMEX

	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Net Change	% YTD	52-week Low
SPDR	399.96	20.79	+.42	+.42
Smith	902.29	31.37	-.77	-.77
SPDR	370.44	16.48	+.29	+.29
SPDR	482.97	18.27	+.49	+.49
SPDR	382.92	19.28	+.84	+.84
SPDR	215.84	16.87	+.81	+.81
SPDR	241.4	36.29	+.11	+.11
SPDR	234.95	1.86	-.03	-.03
SPDR	277.07	16.39	-.39	-.39
SPDR	277.07	16.39	-.39	-.39

NASDAQ

	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Net Change	% YTD	52-week Low
Microsoft	12,560.27	21.73	-.02	-.02
Google	94.98	1.95	-.20	-.20
Nasdaq	17,704	46.48	-.28	-.28
Switzerland (Franc)	1,062.2	14.23	+.40	+.40
Thailand (Baht)	7,596.64	24.34	+.41	+.41
Turkey (Lira)	1,419,000	2.54	-.01	-.01
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Horoscope

Love planet Venus embraces the realm of Sagittarius, where it will languish until the second week of January. We're like curious teens who are at once repelled and compelled by the notion of falling in love. The more "dangerous" a romantic prospect, the more drawn we are to it. This transit also brings a greater acceptance of other cultures.

THE 12TH BIRTHDAY

DECEMBER 16. You're sure of yourself this year—confidence carries you into situations you could only speculate about in years past. Increased career demands in the new year are a good thing, giving you the opportunity to show you're worthy of a better position. Love is fulfilling and comfortable until May, when you turn into an infatuated teen again! Your lucky numbers are: 6, 40, 50, 33 and 21.

ARIES (March 21-April 19).

You're not acting out of your own need to succeed; you're performing for those around you. Whatever the motivation, it causes you to push yourself. You'll be an inspiration to that perpetual underachiever you know.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20).

Colleagues could treat you as a freshman—how annoying, especially considering that you're the one with all the experience. When you focus on what you know, instead of on how others treat you, it is a source of pride.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21).

Others look at you sideways, pay them no mind. You're a self-taught person and therefore have a unique way of solving problems. Singles meet love while helping a friend or boss.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). An experimental mood has you feeling flippant, clever and playful! You'll get a crash course in romantic communication and learn very quickly what works—and what never to say again!

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). When

baragued with too much information, you're discerning, objective and fair. You'll be exposed to propaganda. It's your job to make sure the more glib people around you aren't duped.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). If today were a painting, it would be a slick piece of pop art. You'll be seduced by glamour, commercialism and celebrity—but at the same time, something deeper in you longs for substance. Reach to loved ones to get grounded.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're not a cartoon character who, after being flattened by a steamroller, arrives in the next scene back to normal again. You're flesh and bone and spirit—you require a recovery period! Give it to yourself.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Loved ones have you doing acrobatics in order to get the validation you desire. Consider the lengths you'll go to for something you could possibly provide for yourself. What would it take for you to love yourself more?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

You're deep, so you see depth in things that other people can only see in one dimension. It's remarkable how you can turn the most menial of jobs into a trip through the grand amusement park of life.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

You may be accident prone, so keep your mind on the task at hand. You're also vulnerable to happy mistakes—the kind that land you in a much better position than the one you intended.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

A penchant for overblown passion is featured. But your relationship doesn't deserve, or need, the flash of drama. Exercise the feeling by reading a romance novel while listening to a Liberace record.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

Dare to make new requirements of your friends, your customers and the people who help you maintain your lifestyle. What would happen if you expected 10 percent more integrity and heart from these folks?

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



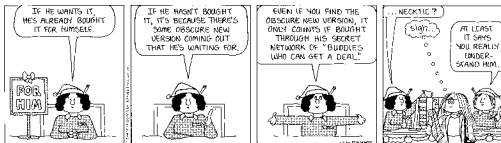
Jump Start



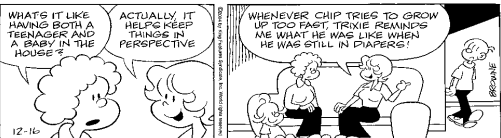
Zits



Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



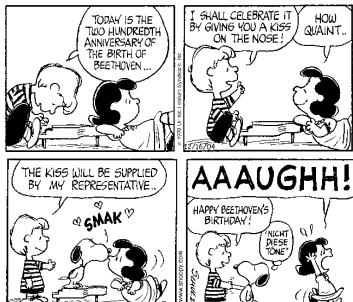
Red and Rover



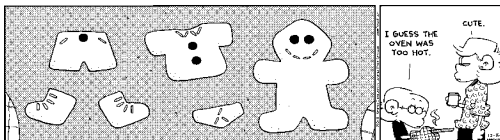
Better or Worse



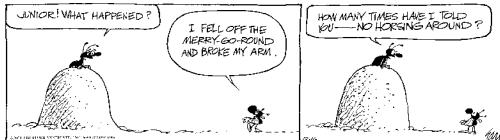
Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



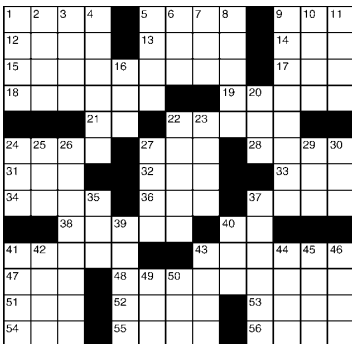
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Indy circuits
5 Minus
9 Pooch
12 Settled down
13 "— You Babe"
14 Spacewalk acronym
15 Moses' armload
17 Scoundrel
18 Toadies
19 Spacious
21 Old man
22 1982 Barry Levinson movie
24 Lather
27 Started
28 Engrossed
31 Multipurpose
32 Trick taker, usually
33 Afternoon social
34 Fugate composer
36 Off-tattooed word
37 Average
38 Special-interest group
40 Two (Pref.)
41 Farewell
43 Longing
47 Heavy weight
48 Shedding seasonally
51 Raw rock
52 Morose
53 Dance lessons
54 Frenzied

- 55 Barely gets by, with "out"
56 Uncomplicated

Down

- 1 Woman
2 Sheltered
3 Snapshots
4 Postage
5 "The — King"
6 Early bird
7 Old French coin
8 Unrelenting
9 Adorn
10 Latin 6-Down
11 Indiana city
16 Actress
Thompson
20 "— the trumpets ..."
22 Fake drake
23 The same (Lat.)
24 U-boat
25 Actress Hagen
26 Just said no
27 Easter entree
29 Shell-game prop
30 Treat hides
35 Weeding tool
37 Handle
38 wrongly
39 Move a bit
40 Foundation
41 Power source
42 "David Copperfield" wife
43 Lowers the lights
44 Scintilla
45 Wishes undone
46 Catch sight of
49 Wapiti
50 Prompt

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-16

CRYPTOQUIP

XPEUI PT XPO TEPW N
TNLZLRA ULOBOE WLAJB
FO "N XNLB LI N BOELFZO

BJLRA BP WLRU."
Yesterday's Cryptquip: I ASKED MY HORSE IF HE'D LIKE SOME MORE HAY. "NO THANK YOU, I'M ALREADY STUFFED."

Today's Cryptquip Clue: X equals W

Eavesdroppers can be toyed with

Dear Abby: My husband took me out to an expensive restaurant. As we chatted over dinner, we realized that the couple next to us was eavesdropping on our conversation. They could hear everything we were saying. They kept turning their heads and looking straight at us. They even tried to peek when the check came.

My husband and I tried to ignore it, however, it put a damper on our nice evening. How should we tell about our dinner conversation?

— Conversationally Speaking in Delaware
Dear Conversationally Speaking: You and your husband missed an opportunity to have some fun. If you invent wild enough dialogue, the reaction can be funnier than a floor show. You could have raised your voices just a bit and begun discussing how you were going to spend the "drug money" or which girl you planned to send on the next "call." Short of

asking to be seated at another table, there is no foolproof way to discourage nosy eavesdroppers.

Dear Abby: My letter is in response to the one from the neighbors who complained about the noise their neighbor's children made playing basketball in the yard.

As a boy, many years ago, I probably annoyed my neighbors the same way. Now that boy has grown into a man, who has taken care of literally thousands of children in my practice of behavioral pediatrics. Experience tells me that if all youngsters would be outside playing basketball or any other activity of exertion, we would have far fewer academic and behavioral problems.

Approximately 75 percent of my patients never go outside to play. Many of them are addicted to video games, and some to television. The ramifications of this addiction are enormous.

These children tend to be more agitated and anxious. Their blood pressure and pulse are often increased. Their imagination is dulled. They have a higher risk of obesity, early onset diabetes, and future cardiovascular disease. Their sleep patterns are upset, and there is some evidence that they are at increased risk for seizures.

If the pounding of a basketball is annoying to some folks, they should step back and look at the big picture.

— Joel P. Sussman, M.D., FAAP, Columbia, S.C.

Dear Dr. Sussman: Thank you for an important letter. As some readers pointed out, the complainer should be thankful the neighbor children are involved in activities as healthy as athletics. People who can't stand the sound of children playing should relocate to a development for seniors.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69460, Los Angeles, CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.uspspress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ENSOO

YURLS

GROJAN

FLUDON

A: THE

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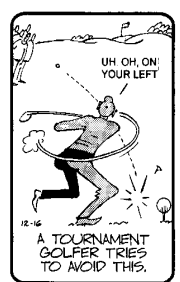
www.jumble.com

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's Jumbles: CHUTE PLUME SHOULD WHEEZE Answer: What the pie-eating champ did to the competition — CHEWED THEM UP

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answers tomorrow

Yesterday's Jumbles: CHUTE PLUME SHOULD WHEEZE Answer: What the pie-eating champ did to the competition — CHEWED THEM UP

Matchmakers won't give it a rest

Dear Annie: I'm gay and have been in a loving relationship for over 20 years. My partner and I are only in our early 40s, but I know I have my soul mate and wish for no other. We are quiet, reserved types with no obvious traditional signs of attachment.

For most of our relationship, we have dreaded the inevitable questions: "Are you married?" and so forth. We usually respond "no" and leave it at that. We don't wish to elaborate. Frequently, though, this doesn't stop the matchmakers who are keen to introduce us to their single, female friends. We have found that however we answer, the matchmaker always reacts negatively.

Our relationship is not a secret, but it is private. We generally do not volunteer that we are a couple except in appropriate environments, because we can't be sure if our new (presumably straight) acquaintances will react positively. We simply don't find it necessary to let people know we're

Annie's Mailbox



anything other than roommates, and many acquaintances are very surprised when they learn the truth.

What can we say to these matchmakers who seem well-meaning, but are ultimately insensitive and prying?

— Won't Give the Game Away

Dear Game: Your signature indicates that you are not entirely comfortable being out of the closet, but that's your call. Most people would suspect that a man in his 40s who's been roommates with "Joe" for 20 years may be gay. For the clueless-yet-persistent matchmakers, simply say, "Thanks, but I'm already spoken for." Then excuse yourself and walk away.

Dear Annie: You printed a letter about an 8-year-old who was sexually harassed in school. I have an 8-year-old daughter who has sexually harassed others at her school. She is not a bully

nor was she abused. She has a neurological condition called Early Onset Bipolar Disorder.

Most people think bipolar means up-and-down moods. While this is true, the illness is neurologically based and, especially in children, can have many different symptoms, including inappropriate sexual behavior.

My daughter has taken medication since she was 4. It helps considerably, but she has occasional periods of instability.

For more information, please check out the Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation (www.bpkids.org), for parents of children who are bipolar, at 1000 Skokie Blvd., Suite 425, Wilmette, IL 60091.

— Bipolar Mom

Dear Mom: We hope your daughter's school has educated the other parents to better understanding about your situation.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

Family Circus



"We picked out the ones that say 'and children.' Can we hang them in our room?"

GRAFFITI



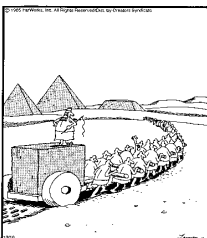
Domis the Menace



"BY THE WAY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT GETTING YOUR SUIT DIRTY. WE HAD OUR CHIMNEY CLEANED."

© Gary Larson

The Far Side



"Excuse me, sir, but Shinkovsky keeps stepping on the back of my sandal."

Non Sequitur



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SCOREBOARD

AFTN TV & Radio

Thursday

AFTN-Sports, 9 a.m. College basketball: DePaul at Northwestern (did not play).
6 p.m. NFL: Baltimore at Orlando at San Antonio (did not play).

AFTN-Sports, 6:30 p.m. NBA: Utah at Phoenix (did not play).

Friday

AFTN-Athletics, 1:30 a.m. NFL: NFL's Greatest Game: Divisional Round, Baltimore at Cleveland at Detroit.
AFTN-Sports, 2:15 a.m. NBA: Cleveland at Detroit.
AFTN-Athletics, 1 a.m. College basketball: Ohio at Texas Tech (did not play).

AFTN-Sports, 4:30 a.m. College basketball: Ohio at Texas Tech (did not play).

AFTN-Sports, 7 p.m. NBA: Lakers at Sacramento (did not play).

All Times Central European Time: did indicate broadcast. All listings subject to change. Visit www.mylnt.net for more information.

College basketball

AP Men's Top 25 fared

Tuesday

1. Illinois (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. Valparaiso, Sunday.
 2. Kansas (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. Kansas State, Saturday.
 3. Georgia Tech (6-0) did not play. Next: vs. Jacksonville, Saturday.
 4. Oklahoma State (7-0) did not play. Next: at UNLV, Saturday.

5. New Carolina (7-1) did not play. Next: at Virginia Tech, Saturday.
 6. Wake Forest (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Duke, Saturday.
 7. Duke (7-0) beat Illinois-Chicago 88-65.
 8. N.C. vs. Oklahoma, Saturday.
 9. Kentucky (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Tennessee, Saturday.

10. Pittsburgh (6-0) did not play. Next: at Illinois, Saturday.
 11. Connecticut (4-1) did not play. Next: vs. Rhode Island, Saturday.
 12. North Carolina State (7-0) did not play. Next: vs. Louisiana State, Saturday.

13. Louisville (6-1) beat North Carolina 69-51. Next: vs. No. 8 Kentucky, Saturday.
 14. Texas (6-1) did not play. Next: vs. Texas-Arlington, Wednesday.

15. Arizona (6-1) did not play. Next: at Marquette, Saturday.
 16. Alabama (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. West-ern Carolina, Saturday.
 17. Tennessee State (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. Tennessee State, Saturday.

18. Washington (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. No. 12 North Carolina, Saturday.
 19. George Washington (5-1) did not play. Next: vs. Towson, Saturday.
 20. Mississippi State (6-2) did not play. Next: at Xavier, Saturday.

21. Michigan State (6-0) did not play. Next: vs. Delaware State, Saturday.
 22. Cincinnati (6-0) did not play. Next: vs. No. 3 Georgia Tech, Saturday.
 23. Maryland (5-2) did not play. Next: vs. Florida State, Saturday.

24. Maryland (5-2) did not play. Next: vs. Loyola Marymount, Thursday, Dec. 23.
 25. Cincinnati (6-0) did not play. Next: vs. Northwestern State, Saturday.

Tuesday's men's scores

LAST

Bethany, W.V., 76; Wright 70.
 Fairfield, Md., Harvard 53.
 Fairleigh Dickinson, N.J., 69.
 Macalester, Minn., 63.
 Villanova, Pa., Fordham 47.

Clemson, S.C., North 56.
 2. Kentucky 87, Greenville 62.
 3. Wake Forest 85, Virginia Tech 59.
 Georgia College 73, Paine 56.
 5. Louisville 69, William & Mary 57.

6. Louisville 65, North Carolina 44.
 7. South Carolina 72, South Florida 70.
 Tampa Bay, Fla., Alabama 52.
 10. Tennessee State 67, Alabama 67.
 Tusculum, N.C., King 75.

11. Austin, Texas 79, Michigan 67.
 12. Cleveland 91, Oberlin 65.
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3. Duke (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Jacksonville State, Wednesday.
 4. Texas (6-2) did not play. Next: at Texas Tech, Thursday.
 5. North Carolina (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Georgia State at Myrtle Beach, S.C., Sunday.

6. Baylor (7-1) did not play. Next: at Washington State, Saturday.
 7. Notre Dame (6-1) did not play. Next: at Marquette, Sunday.
 8. Connecticut (4-1) did not play. Next: at New Orleans, Sunday.

9. Tennessee (5-2) did not play. Next: at Louisiana Tech, Wednesday.
 10. Ohio State (9-1) did not play. Next: at Oklahoma State, Saturday.

11. Michigan State (8-1) did not play. Next: vs. Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, Sunday.
 12. Texas Tech (5-1) did not play. Next: at Texas Tech, Saturday.
 13. Minnesota (9-2) lost to No. 1 LSU 75-67.
 14. North Dakota, Thursday, Dec. 22.

15. Boston College (7-1) did not play. Next: vs. Illinois, Saturday.
 16. Georgia Tech (6-1) did not play. Next: vs. Alabama at Springfield, Mo., Saturday.

17. Vanderbilt (7-1) did not play. Next: at Valparaiso, Calif., Monday.
 18. Maryland (9-0) did not play. Next: vs. Coppin State, Monday.
 19. Ohio State (9-0) did not play. Next: at Hawaii, Thursday.

20. Purdue (6-2) did not play. Next: vs. No. 3 Duke at Indianapolis, Saturday.
 21. DePaul (6-0) did not play. Next: at Northern Illinois, Saturday.
 22. Rutgers (6-1) did not play. Next: vs. Clemson, Saturday.

23. North Carolina State (7-1) did not play. Next: at New Mexico, Saturday.
 24. Iowa (6-0) did not play. Next: at Drake, Saturday.
 25. Kansas State (5-2) did not play. Next: vs. Alabama at Springfield, Mo., Saturday.

Tuesday's women's scores

Boston U.S., Harvard 53.
 Cincinnati 47, Rutgers-Camden 45.
 Kings Point, N.Y., Vincent 62.
 Philadelphia 84, Rutgers-Camden 45.
 7. Rutgers-Camden 45, Hunter 40.
 SUNY Farmingdale, CUNY 57.
 No. 8 Cal, Penn State 66.

9. Kentucky 61, Penn State 44.
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Motor City Bowl
 At Detroit
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Toledo (9-3) vs. Connecticut (7-4)
Independence Bowl
 At Independence, Mo.
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Iowa State (9-3) vs. Texas Tech (5-8) (4-5)

Payson \$760,000
 Oregon State (6-5) vs. Notre Dame (6-5)
Muskegon Bowl
 At Muskegon, Mich.
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Texas (6-2) vs. Colorado (7-5)

At San Antonio
 Ohio State (7-4) vs. Oklahoma State (7-4)
At San Antonio
 Texas Tech (5-8) vs. Texas Tech (5-8)
Continental Tire Bowl
 At Charlotte, N.C.
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Boston College (7-4) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

Emerald Bowl
 At San Francisco
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 New Mexico (7-4) vs. Navy (9-2)
At San Diego
 California (10-1) vs. Texas Tech (7-4)
At San Jose, Calif.
 Payson \$760,000
 Troy (7-4) vs. Northern Illinois (9-3)

Muskegon Bowl
 At Muskegon, Mich.
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Alabama (8-1) vs. Michigan (6-5)
Payson \$760,000
 At El Paso, Texas
 Payson \$760,000
 Purdue (7-4) vs. North Carolina (6-5)

Liberty Bowl
 At Liberty, Mo.
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Boise State (11-0) vs. Missouri (10-1)
Peach Bowl
 At Atlanta
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Miami (8-3) vs. Florida (9-2)

At Dallas
 Tennessee (9-3) vs. Texas A&M (7-4)
At Tampa, Fla.
 Payson \$760,000
 Wisconsin (9-2) vs. Georgia (9-2)
Sator Bowl
 At Jacksonville, Fla.
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Florida State (9-3) vs. West Virginia (8-3)

Payson \$760,000
 At Orlando, Fla.
 Payson \$760,000
 Iowa (9-2) vs. LSU (9-2)
Rose Bowl
 At Pasadena, Calif.
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Michigan (9-2) vs. Texas (10-1)

At Tampa, Fla.
 Payson \$760,000
 Utah (11-0) vs. Pittsburgh (6-2)
Monday, Jan. 3
 At New Orleans
 Payson \$1.1 million
 Auburn (12-0) vs. Georgia Tech (10-2)

Tuesday, Jan. 4
 At Miami
 Payson \$1.1 million
 Southern Cal (12-0) vs. Oklahoma (12-0)
Saturday, Jan. 8
 At The Villages, Fla.
 East-West Shrine Classic
 At San Francisco

Saturday, Jan. 22
 At Maui, Hawaii
 Payson \$1.1 million
 San Diego vs. San Diego
At Maui, Hawaii
 Payson \$1.1 million
 North vs. South

NCAA Div. I-AA playoffs
 Semifinals, Friday, Dec. 18
 James Madison (8-5), William & Mary 34
Saturday, Dec. 11
 Montana 34, Reno-Henderson 13
Championship
 At Foley Stadium/Davenport field
 James Madison (12-2) vs. Montana (12-2)

NCAA Div. II playoffs
 Semifinals
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Mary Hardin-Baylor 38, Mount Union, Ohio 35

Linfield, Ore. 52, Rowan, N.J. 0
Saturday, Dec. 18
Stagii Bowl
 At Stagg, Calif.
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 Mary Hardin-Baylor (12-1) vs. Linfield, Ore. (12-0)

NBA playoffs
Championship
 At San Francisco
 Saturday, Dec. 18
 St. Francis, Ind. (13-0) vs. Carroll, Mont. (11-2)

Baseball
Free agent signings
 NEW YORK (AP) — The 69 free agents who have signed, with name, position, former club and different, contract, contract information was obtained by The Associated Press from player and management sources:

AMERICAN LEAGUE
ANAHIM (C) — Signed Steve Finley, of Los Angeles, to a \$14 million, two-year contract, signed Esteban Yan, of Detroit, to a \$2.25 million, two-year contract signed Paul Byrd, of Atlanta, to a \$4.5 million, one-year contract.

BALTIMORE (C) — Re-signed BJ Surhoff, of Oakland, to a \$2.15 million, two-year contract. Signed Chris Gomez, of Toronto, to a minor league contract (\$25,000).

BOSTON (C) — Re-signed Doug Mireault, of Boston, to a two-year contract, signed Matt Maletz, of Arizona, to a \$750,000, one-year contract, signed Mike Williams, of San Diego, to an \$8 million, two-year contract.

CHICAGO (C) — Signed Dustin Hermanson, of San Francisco, to a two-year contract, signed Jermaine Dye, of Oakland, to a \$2.15 million, two-year contract.

CLEVELAND (C) — Re-signed Bob Wickman, of Cleveland, to a two-year contract, signed Jose Hernandez, 26, of Los Angeles, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract.

DETROIT (C) — Signed Troy Percival, of Anaheim, to a \$12 million, two-year contract, signed Mike Williams, of San Diego, to an \$8 million, two-year contract.

MINNESOTA (C) — Re-signed Kevin Applegate, of Minnesota, to a \$2.25 million, two-year contract, signed Mike Williams, of San Diego, to an \$8 million, two-year contract.

NEW YORK (C) — Re-signed John Flaherty, of New York, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract, signed Mike Williams, of San Diego, to an \$8 million, two-year contract.

SEATTLE (C) — Re-signed Dan Wilson, of Seattle, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract, signed Mike Williams, of San Diego, to an \$8 million, two-year contract.

Texas (C) — Re-signed Doug Brocail, of Texas, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract, signed Manny Alexander, 26, to a minor league contract (\$25,000).

Toronto (C) — Re-signed Doug Myers, of Toronto, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract, signed Mike Williams, of San Diego, to an \$8 million, two-year contract.

Arizona (C) — Re-signed Quinton McCracken, of Arizona, to a minor league contract (\$25,000), signed Troy Percival, of Anaheim, to a \$12 million, two-year contract, signed Russ Ortiz, of Atlanta, to a \$3.3 million, two-year contract, signed Kelly Stretch, of Kansas City, to a minor league contract (\$25,000).

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Oakland, to an \$8.5 million, three-year contract, signed Russ Ortiz, of Atlanta, to a \$3.3 million, two-year contract, signed Kelly Stretch, of Kansas City, to a minor league contract (\$25,000).

MONTREAL (C) — Signed Kristian Guzman, of Montreal, to a \$1.5 million, one-year contract, signed Russ Ortiz, of Atlanta, to a \$3.3 million, two-year contract, signed Kelly Stretch, of Kansas City, to a minor league contract (\$25,000).

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Duckett to sit out after knee surgery

Falcons RB will return for playoffs

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Falcons running back T.J. Duckett is expected to miss one game after undergoing surgery on his left knee on Tuesday.

Atlanta coach Jim Mora said the surgery to repair the meniscus cartilage in Duckett's left knee "went very well."

"We don't expect him to miss more than just this game," said Mora of Saturday night's home game against Carolina.

The surgery comes two days after Duckett rushed for a team-record four touchdowns in a 35-10 victory over Oakland that clinched the South Division title.

Duckett, bothered by persistent swelling in his left knee, had hoped to put off the arthroscopic surgery until after the season. Because the Falcons (10-3) clinched the playoff berth Sunday with three games left in the regular season and could qualify for a first-round bye in the playoffs — giving Duckett another week to heal — the team decided to proceed with the surgery.

"I think it was clicking or just bothering him," Mora said.

Erickson staying with 49ers

ASHBURN, Va. — San Francisco coach Dennis Erickson said Wednesday he is no longer a candidate to become coach at Mississippi.

Erickson met with Mississippi's athletic director and chancellor for two hours in Santa Clara, Calif., on Tuesday night, but he was not offered the job.

"It wasn't the right fit either way," Erickson said. "It wasn't the right fit for me, and it wasn't the right fit for Ole Miss."

Erickson has three seasons and \$7.5 million remaining on his contract with the 49ers, but his future has been in question during a difficult season. San Francisco (2-11), the worst record in the NFC.

Fisher to talk with McNair about ending season early

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee quarterback Steve McNair could sit out the final three games of the season with a bruised stomach that has kept him from playing the past two games.

"I've never owned a team that I've seen anybody anymore to getther than what all of the people are in place on this team at this time," McNair said. "Players, coaches, staff, all together."

Yes, solace comes from solidarity — and from the standings. The Vikings still can take the NFC North — needing only to win their three remaining games, regardless of what the Packers do. Even just one more victory could get Minnesota a wild-card spot.

NFL Briefs

With the Titans (4-9) officially eliminated from playoff contention, coach Jeff Fisher said Tuesday that he will talk with McNair in the next few days to decide the immediate future.

Fisher has said McNair will need up to eight weeks of inactivity for his chest to heal. Sitting McNair for the rest of the season would give the quarterback a five-week head start on deciding whether he wants to return for 2005.

Browns lose another lineman

CLEVELAND — The Browns placed center Jeff Faine on injured reserve Tuesday, the 18th player and ninth starter Cleveland has lost for the season.

Faine injured his ankle in last week's loss at Buffalo on the same play that ended quarterback Jeff Garcia's season. Garcia was placed on injured reserve with a torn knee ligament.

With the loss of Faine, Cleveland's only remaining starter on the offensive line.

Bucs put tight end Heller on IR

TAMPA, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Buccaneers placed tight end Will Heller on injured reserve Tuesday with a sprained hip and activated rookie tight end Nate Lawrie from the practice squad.

Heller had 12 receptions for 98 yards and one touchdown in 10 games this season.

Niners put CB Plummer on injured reserve

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — San Francisco cornerback Ahmed Plummer, who hasn't played since Oct. 17, was placed on injured reserve Tuesday because a bulging disc in his neck.

Plummer, a five-year veteran who signed a \$25 million contract in March, has been bothered by neck problems since last season. The 49ers (2-11) hoped he could return this year, but Plummer's neck hasn't responded well enough to rehabilitation.

Indeed, three of the five defeats during this skid have come by a total of 10 points. Moss, a nonfactor for five games with a partially torn hamstring, is just about at full strength. Though the offense has just three second-half points over the last two games, quarterback Daunte Culpepper is enjoying a cancer season and he's got a very capable core of running backs.

And while the defense continues to self-destruct in the first half, the Vikings have given up a



San Francisco 49ers running back Kevan Barlow (32) didn't play last Sunday because of a concussion and lost his starting job as a result.

New diminished role irks 49ers RB Barlow

BY GREG BEACHAM

The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Kevan Barlow can think of more than 20 million reasons he should still be the San Francisco 49ers' starting running back.

Barlow is upset with coach Dennis Erickson's decision to start Maurice Hicks against the Washington Redskins on Saturday, even though Hicks had the best performance by a San Francisco runner this season in last week's win at Arizona.

Hicks rushed for 139 yards in his first NFL start while Barlow was sidelined by a concussion. Barlow is ready to return this week, and Hicks is hampered by a rib injury — but Hicks will start if he's healthy enough.

"I was very disappointed. I didn't agree with that," Barlow said Tuesday. "I think I deserve to be the starter, but I've said from day one I support Coach Erickson, and do whatever he wants to do."

Barlow repeatedly cited the organization's commitment to him as the reason for his loyalty. Barlow is in the form of a \$20 million contract with \$8 million in guaranteed money — as one reason he should keep the job.

"They invested in me," Barlow said. "They want me to be the guy

out there ... and I want to do the job. I'm 25. I ain't going nowhere no time soon. I'm happy to be here."

But his numbers on the field haven't supported the digits on his paycheck. Barlow averages just 3.2 yards per carry this season, with 629 yards and six touchdowns. He's unlikely even to match the 1,024 yards he gained last season while splitting playing time with Garrison Hearst.

Erickson said both Barlow and Hicks will get a chance to show what they can do against the Redskins' impressive defense.

"They are both going to play," Erickson said. "And then when [Barlow] gets an opportunity to play, go out and earn the position back. In my book, that's just how I look at it right now at this part of the season."

Barlow's frustration has grown during San Francisco's 2-11 season. He has defended his play and indirectly criticized his offensive line — but after he jokingly suggested last week that the 49ers should use all their upcoming draft picks on linemen, he apologized to his blockers.

"I've grown with this offensive line from day one, and they're starting to block, and I think I should be out there with them," Barlow said.

Dolphins talk with LSU coach about job

The Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — LSU coach Nick Saban has talked to the Miami Dolphins about their vacant head coaching position.

In a statement issued by LSU on Wednesday, Saban described the talks as "a preliminary conversation with the Dolphins to exchange ideas about their head coaching position."

"No decisions were made at this meeting and they will continue their search for a coach," Saban said. "I will continue to be committed to LSU, our football program and totally focused on our bowl game versus Iowa."

LSU (9-2) meets Iowa (9-2) on Jan. 11 in the Capital One Bowl.

Dolphins President Eddie Jones said he and owner Wayne Huizenga met with Saban, but did not divulge any other specific details on the meeting and, like Saban, stressed that no choices have been made.

"In keeping with our policy to conduct this search with integrity prior to speaking with Coach Saban we did contact LSU interim chancellor William L. Jenkins to inform him of our meeting," Jones said in a statement released by the team.

Dolphins interim coach Jim Bates said he hasn't yet discussed the prospects of leading the team in 2005 with Huizenga, but added that conversation will take place later this week.

Saban notified LSU in writing about the meeting with the Dolphins, said athletics director Skip Bertman. Bertman said Saban "has been forthright in his communication with the university about this and I support him in any direction that he may take."

After the season ended, Saban resigned as Miami coach in November after the Dolphins' 1-8 start and was replaced on an interim basis by Bates, the team's defensive coordinator.

Haze: Weak NFC North favors Vikings

HAZE, FROM BACK PAGE

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The Associated Press

ALAMEDA, Calif. — The Oakland Raiders are close to signing placekicker Sebastian Janikowski to a five-year contract extension.

"We're trying to finalize some loose ends," player personnel chief Michael Lombardi said Tuesday.

The deal should be completed by the end of the week, Lombardi said, but did not wish to elaborate on the extension.

The 26-year-old Janikowski,

the Raiders' first-round draft pick in 2000, has converted all but three of his 22 field-goal attempts this season for the Raiders (4-9). He is 112-for-140 in his career.

He hit a 52-yarder during Sunday's 35-10 loss at Atlanta and has made one other beyond 50 yards this season.

He has eclipsed the performance standards in the initial eight-year deal he signed as a rookie in 2000, allowing him to void the final three years of the contract and become a free agent after this season.

Raiders near deal with kicker

SEC will fine schools when fans rush field

The Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Southeastern Conference schools could face fines of as much as \$50,000 if fans come onto the field or court during football or basketball games.

The policy was approved by all SEC schools and took effect Dec. 1. It states that "access to competition areas shall be limited to participating student-athletes, coaches, officials, support personnel and properly credentialed individuals at all times."

The policy imposes fines on schools for violations in football and men's and women's basketball. The penalties range from \$5,000 for a first offense to fines of up to \$25,000 for a second offense and up to \$50,000 for a third and subsequent offense. The size of the penalty will be determined by the commissioner.

"This policy is designed to create a safe environment for our student-athletes, coaches, staff and fans," SEC commissioner Mike Slive said Tuesday. "Our institutions felt that this was a step that needed to be taken."

Fans who violate the rules can be kicked out, arrested and kept from purchasing tickets. Students may also be punished by their schools for violating the rules.

CIAA picks Charlotte for basketball tournaments

HAMPTON, Va. — Charlotte beat out fellow North Carolina rival Raleigh to host the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association's men's and women's basketball tournament from 2006 through 2008.

The decision was based on a majority vote Tuesday of the 12-member institutions' presidents and chancellors.

The 2005 tournament will be played in Raleigh, where they have been since 2000.

Starting in March, the CIAA men's tournament will enjoy expanded television exposure, as ESPN agreed last week to a three-year deal to televise games. That makes the CIAA the first NCAA Division II conference to have its games televised by ESPN.

Sports briefs

as part of its Championship Week coverage.

The conference's 12 schools are Bowie State, Elizabeth City State, Fayetteville State, Johnson C. Smith University, Livingston, North Carolina Central, St. Augustine's, St. Paul's College, Shaw, Virginia State, Virginia Union, and Winston-Salem State.

Bush, not Leinart, chosen USC's MVP

LOS ANGELES — Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Matt Leinart wasn't even selected the most valuable player on his own team.

That honor went to running back Reggie Bush at No. 1 Southern California's annual awards banquet Tuesday night. Bush finished fifth in the Heisman voting. Seniors Shaun Cody and Mike Patterson shared USC's defensive linemen of the year award; redshirt freshman offensive tackle Sam Bricker was voted the team's offensive lineman of the year; and redshirt freshman tailback Desmond Reed was the special teams player of the year.

Linebackers Matt Groeged and Lofa Tuatu shared the most inspirational player award.

The awards were determined by a vote of the players.

Austria to choose bid city for 2014 Games next month

VIENNA, Austria — Austria's Olympic Committee said Wednesday it'll decide next month between Innsbruck and Salzburg for the country's 2014 Winter Olympics bid.

The committee will pick the candidate Jan. 24, the statement said.

Innsbruck hosted the 1964 and the 1976 Winter Olympics.

Salzburg was shortlisted as a candidate for the 2010 games, but finished a distant third — behind the winner, Vancouver, and Pyeongchang, South Korea, which has indicated it, too, might try again for the 2014 Games.

BY BRETT MARTEL

The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Southern Mississippi coach Jeff Bower relied on an array of linebacker blitzes to slow down freshman running back Jamario Thomas.

The scheme stifled North Texas' passing game as well.

Southern Miss ended Thomas' streak of 100-yard games at seven, sacked quarterback Scott Hall six times and got a 62-yard touchdown on Michael Boley's interception of an attempted screen pass. The result was a 31-10 victory in the New Orleans Bowl on Tuesday night, Southern Mississippi's first postseason triumph in four years.

"The key was getting pressure on the quarterback and make him throw quick. No quarterback wants to be out of rhythm," Bower said. "Sometimes when you do that you get a little more effort. When you blitz and go fast you maybe pick up the tempo a little bit."

Boley, named MVP of the first bowl of the postseason, made eight tackles, including two sacks.

As for the Southern Miss defense, Dustin Almond threw for 247 yards. He had a touchdown pass and ran for a score in the opening quarter, giving the Golden Eagles an early lead they never relinquished.

North Texas' season had been defined by adversity overcome.

Quarterback Andrew Smith died in a car accident just before training camp, starting running back Patrick Cobbs injured his knee in the second game and never returned, and the Mean Green lost their first four games before winning seven straight to earn their fourth straight trip to the New Orleans Bowl.

But Southern Miss (7-5), which narrowly lost to No. 4 California earlier this month, outplayed North Texas throughout. USM finished with a 403-212 advantage in total yardage, with Southern Miss

gaining 104 yards on 14 carries.

North Texas, the four-time Sun Belt Conference champion, dropped to 1-3 in the New Orleans Bowl. Thomas, a freshman who missed his final regular-season game with a sore hamstring, finished with 92 yards on 30 carries.

"The biggest thing they did defensively was sending rovers off the outside edges, which gave us problems in the running and passing games," North Texas coach Darrell Dickley said. "We didn't play our best football. We couldn't run like we're accustomed to."

Hall was held to just 57 yards passing through three quarters.

He finished 15-for-30 for 134 yards and two interceptions.

"They brought it today," Hall said. "Guys were coming off the edge all night. They took away our play-action game."



North Texas quarterback Scott Hall is sacked by Southern Mississippi linebacker Michael Boley during second half of the New Orleans Bowl.

Southern Miss. 31, N. Texas 10

Southern Miss. 31 0 14-31

North Texas 10 0 10-7-30

First Quarter

USM—Graves 37 yards from Almond (McCauley kick), 11:57

USM—Almond 1 run (McCauley kick), 6:13

Second Quarter

NT—FG Bazzani 24, 10:08

USM—FG McCauley 46, 1:55

Fourth Quarter

USM—Boley 62 interception return (McCauley kick), 12:53

USM—Moore 1 run (McCauley kick), 12:06

NT—Quinn 10 pass from Hall (Bazzani kick), 3:11

4-7-23.

Time of Possession

USM 32:28

Individual Statistics

Running—Southern Miss, Harris 14-94, Moore 10-33, Thomas 4-24, Weakley 1-2, Almond 3-4, Quinn 2-10, Bazzani 1-10, Moore 1-1, Mitchell 1-1, Hall 8-minus 16.

Passing—Southern Miss, Harris 15-30-134.

Receiving—Southern Miss, Cunningham 5-50, Graves 1-15, Porter 2-25, Thomas 2-37, Harris 1-33, Lawrence 1-11, Young 1-7, Bazzani 1-10, Quinn 1-10, Bazzani 1-10, Mitchell 1-1, Jackson 1-7, Thomas 1-4.

Defensive—Southern Miss, Boley 8-104, Moore 10-33, Thomas 4-24, Weakley 1-2, Almond 3-4, Quinn 2-10, Bazzani 1-10, Moore 1-1, Mitchell 1-1, Hall 8-minus 16.

Special Teams—Southern Miss, Bazzani 1-10, Quinn 1-10, Bazzani 1-10, Mitchell 1-1, Jackson 1-7, Thomas 1-4.

Penalties—Southern Miss, Boley 8-104, Moore 10-33, Thomas 4-24, Weakley 1-2, Almond 3-4, Quinn 2-10, Bazzani 1-10, Moore 1-1, Mitchell 1-1, Hall 8-minus 16.

Fumbles—Southern Miss, Boley 8-104, Moore 10-33, Thomas 4-24, Weakley 1-2, Almond 3-4, Quinn 2-10, Bazzani 1-10, Moore 1-1, Mitchell 1-1, Hall 8-minus 16.

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Time of Possession

USM 32:28

Top Scores for Week 14

Hall of Fame

STARS AND STRIPES

OCONUS.com

Top Scores for Week 14

Best Overall Scores

266	Chipboudy	Camp Anaconda
266	kik025	USA/NT
264	MYCHAPSG&M	11th Sig BN
264	MIKE_V.01	5th Signal Cnd
260	Eddie the Q	615th MP
260	BigFrankfromTexas	470th medical clinic
260	MPSniper	US Delegation to NATO
260	cowboyfan74	69th Trans Co.
260	Stu	Sullivan Sks.
260	jeremy	Ft. Riley

2430	STEEFROGWOOD
2422	giants#1
2418	Bone-Daddy
2414	Jack58
2398	Who Cares
2394	Joe Corleone
2390	Jaguar One
2384	SPIELMEISTER 04
2382	Rambl
2378	BengalsAlltheWay

MAC-12	MAC-12
hbc 2/37 ar	hbc 2/37 ar
HQ, USAREUR, G2	HQ, USAREUR, G2
422 ABS RAF Croughton	422 ABS RAF Croughton
MNF-1 DCSPER	MNF-1 DCSPER
Misawa	Misawa
DoDDs	DoDDs
Wahlefs	Wahlefs
RAF Lakenheath	RAF Lakenheath
ECJ2-JAC-DSTE	ECJ2-JAC-DSTE

See websites for official game rules.

Check this space every Thursday during the entire NFL season for the weeks Top Scores and Best Overall Scores during the NFL Challenge.

Washington's deal for Expos placed in jeopardy

D.C. council's ballpark-financing package could cause baseball to reopen search

By BRETT ZONKGER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Baseball fans in the nation's capital might have long to cheer their new team.

The District of Columbia Council voted 7-6 Tuesday night to approve legislation that would finance construction of a ballpark.

But it contained a provision that could cause the baseball commissioner's office to reopen the search for a long-term home for the Expos franchise, which has been tentatively renamed the Nationals.

The legislation was amended to require private financing for at least half the stadium construction costs, a provision not contained in the September agreement between baseball and Wash-

ington Mayor Anthony A. Williams.

"We will review the amendments and the legislation as passed and have a response [Wednesday]," said Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating officer.

One response came almost immediately: The team postponed a news conference scheduled for Wednesday to await the new terms. No explanation was given.

"I am not trying to kill the deal," said council chair Linda W. Cropp, who introduced the private financing measure. "I'm putting some teeth in it. Because I'm really disappointed with what I got from Major League Baseball."

The amendment passed on a 10-3 vote after Cropp threatened to withhold support from the overall package if the provision wasn't

approved. Cropp said she didn't think the change violated the city's agreement with baseball, but would pressure Williams to find a private financier.

Williams refused to answer questions after the vote.

"We'll have to see how baseball reacts," said Councilman Jack Evans, a baseball proponent. But he said he expects the council will have to change the legislation to keep the deal alive.

"We'll have until the end of the year to change this," Evans said.

City Administrator Robert Babb said city negotiators were talking with baseball officials, but he didn't expect the owners to accept the change.

If the law stands, baseball's main response would be to have the team play the 2005 season at Washington's RFK Stadium

while baseball's search committee resumes negotiations with cities that want the team.

One option could be Las Vegas, which was among the cities competing for the Expos and is still lobbying for the team. Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman campaigned at last week's winter meetings, arriving accompanied by showgirls wearing feathered headresses.

Baseball opponents in Washington said the change makes the deal more equitable.

"We're asking for is private financing for half the stadium," said Councilman Adrian Fenty, who voted against the final legislation. "That shouldn't be a problem."

The Montreal Expos became the first major league team outside the United States when they

started play in 1969, but attendance at Olympic Stadium slumped over the past decade and the franchise was bought by the other 29 teams before the 2002 season. In 2003 and 2004, some of the team's home games were moved to Puerto Rico to raise revenue.

From the baseball owners insisted a public-financed stadium for the team be a component of any move.

When the council gave its initial approval to the law on Nov. 30, it called for the city to issue \$531 million in bonds to finance the plan. Baseball owners approved the Expos' move Dec. 2 on the condition that financing be put in place consistent with the deal, and that arrangements to move the team be completed by 2005 satisfied Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig.

Report: Renteria to sign with Boston

Red Sox say no deal in place yet, sign free-agent pitcher Halamia

The Associated Press

BOSTON — All-Star shortstop Edgar Renteria told The Boston Globe he has agreed to a \$40 million, four-year contract with the Red Sox, a report reported on its Web site Wednesday.

Renteria, who played for St. Louis for the past six years, made the final out of Boston's World Series sweep of the Cardinals. He has a .289 career average and is a four-time All-Star and two-time Gold Glove winner.

Reached by the paper at his home in Colombia, Renteria said the World Series champions made the best offer.

"I like to play on a winning team like Boston, St. Louis or any team that has the opportunity to win," he was quoted as saying.

His decision came down to the two pennant winners, and he said the Red Sox were "more interested in my playing for them."

At a news conference with free agent pitcher John Halamia, who signed a one-year deal with the Red Sox on Wednesday, Red Sox President Larry Lucchino said the team was negotiating with the shortstop and Boston hoped to hold another news conference this week.

"An All-Star and Gold Glove infielder would be a great addition to this or any other team," Lucchino said.

Renteria replaces fellow Colombian Orlando Cabrera, who was acquired in a late-season trade and played a key role in Boston's championship run.

His contract also includes an option for 2009.

Halamia was 7-6 with a 4.70 ERA in 34 games for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays last season. He struck out 59 and walked 27 while allowing 17 homers in 118 1/3 innings. In a seven-year career with four teams, he is 53-43 with a 4.52 ERA.



Edgar Renteria

Union, owners resume talks about steroids

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Lawyers for baseball's players' association and owners resumed talks Tuesday aimed at a new agreement to toughen rules on steroid testing.

Neither side commented on the session, which was described as an ongoing part of the process.

Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig wants more testing, harsher penalties and additional banned substances.

The executive board of the players' association last week gave its staff authorization to go ahead with the talks. The current agreement, criticized by management and politicians, runs through the 2006 season.

Union files grievance over Rockies' termination of Neagle

NEW YORK — The players' association filed a grievance Tuesday in an effort to overturn the Colorado Rockies' termination of Denny Neagle's contract.

Neagle is owed \$19 million under the \$51 million, five-year deal agreed to in December 2000. Colorado terminated the agreement Dec. 6, three days after the oft-injured pitcher was cited for solicitation. Police said a woman in his car told them he had paid her \$40 for oral sex.

Colorado cited section 7(b) (1) of the Uniform Player Contract, which states the team can terminate the contract if a player shall "be found guilty of or convicted of any crime which reflects unfavorably on his personal conduct to the standards of good citizenship and good sportsmanship or to keep himself in first-class physical condition."

A Rockies spokesman said the team had no further comment on Tuesday.

Martinez confirms agreement to sign with Mets

By RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Pedro Martinez confirmed Tuesday that he has agreed to join the New York Mets.

"I only hope to honor my contract and to fulfill the expectations," Martinez said on television in the Dominican Republic. "We got what we wanted. The team and I are happy with everything."

His agent, Fernando Cuza, told the Mets on Monday that they would attempt to work out a deal with them after New York guaranteed a fourth year. The deal for the pitcher who helped Boston win the World Series will be worth more than \$100 million.

"The bigger the contract, the bigger the responsibility," Martinez said.

Martinez said the sides still must determine the distribution of the money, and that he needs to pass a physical.

New York has not announced the deal, choosing to wait until an

agreement is signed and the physical is passed. Martinez spent the past seven seasons with the Red Sox.

"My heart will always be with the Boston fans. I hope that everyone who truly loves me will still support me now that I won't be with the Red Sox," the three-time Cy Young Award winner said.

Martinez rejected a \$40.5 million, three-year offer from the Red Sox and the St. Louis Cardinals offered a four-year deal, a Mets official said Tuesday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Cardinals General Manager Walt Jocketty and Cuza didn't return telephone calls seeking comment.

Arizona, which had talked to the Yankees about trading Randy Johnson to New York, hasn't given up on dealing the Big Unit.

"We're prepared to do it," said a Mets official, who declined to listen to anyone, and there have been other clubs who have expressed interest in Randy,"

managing partner Ken Kendrick said. "We're going to continue to do that, but it's an ultimate decision — if ever made — that needs we and Randy to get together and discuss it and get their representations." And we've not at that point yet."

Incoming Diamondbacks chief executive officer Jeff Moorad called Yankees President Randy Levine on Monday, a baseball official said on condition of anonymity. No new proposals were made, the official said.

New York had broken off talks Dec. 1, saying Arizona's asking price was too high.

Other teams pushed ahead with business. Anaheim agreed to a \$5 million, one-year contract with pitcher aul Byrd and traded Ramon Ortiz to Cincinnati for prospect Dustin Moseley in a swap of right-handers.

A day after San Francisco finalized a deal with catcher Mike MacDougal, the Giants purchased incumbent catcher J. Pierzynski on waivers. San Francisco also agreed to a minor league contract

with left-hander Jeff Fassero, and St. Louis reached a preliminary agreement on a \$600,000, one-year contract with catcher Einar Diaz.

Third baseman Corey Koskie and Toronto finalized their \$18 million, three-year deal, second baseman Jose Hernandez and Cleveland completed their \$1.8 million, one-year agreement and Arizona announced a one-year deal with shortstop Royce Clayton worth \$1.35 million.

Also, first baseman Richie Sexson will have additional medical tests before Seattle finalizes his contract, a baseball official said.

Anaheim added Byrd and remains interested in Matt Clement, who is talking to the Red Sox and other teams. Byrd, 34, was 8-7 with a 3.94 ERA in 19 starts for Atlanta last season. He began the season on the 60-day disabled list recovering from reconstructive elbow surgery and was activated June 19.

AP Sports Writer Enrique Rojas in the Dominican Republic contributed to this report.

**Baseball
free agent
roundup**

hockey season on the ice

No talks scheduled after both sides reject proposals

BY ROB GILLIES
The Associated Press

TORONTO — Ten years ago, the NHL and the players' association salvaged the season after a lockout wiped out half the campaign.

This time, it doesn't look as though they'll be able to save the 2004-05 season.

"I think it's a lot different this time around. I'm less optimistic this year," said Dallas forward Bill Guerin, a member of the union's bargaining committee.

The NHL moved a step closer to losing the season Tuesday when the league and players' association rejected proposals for a new collective bargaining agreement.

The second negotiating session in a week lasted 3½ hours. The league turned down the players' offer on last Thursday and presented a salary cap-based counterproposal for an hour. The union then held its own discussions for 2½ hours before rejecting the offer and ending the meeting that can end on the 30th day of the lockout.

No new meetings have been scheduled, making it quite possible the NHL will become the first North American sports league to cancel a full season because of a labor dispute.

Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin offered federal intervention on Tuesday night. "We had a have said in the past they didn't want an outside mediator to get involved."

Nets play waiting game as Kidd gets into shape

BY TOM CANAVAN
The Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — Having Jason Kidd available for roughly 20 minutes a night is costing the New Jersey Nets.

The New York Knicks took advantage of Kidd's rationed minutes to get back in the game early and capitalized on a 15-minute span in which J-Kidd and company couldn't buy a basket.

"I can only play 20 minutes, so we can't say, 'What if I played more minutes, we would win,'" Kidd said after the Nets lost 87-79 on Tuesday night. "We had a great opportunity and we went cold longer than they did. As a team we have to learn from this."

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For the start, doctors limited him to 20 minutes, although Kidd went 28 in an overtime win over former Nets coach Byron Scott and New Orleans Hornets.

Frank has kept Kidd in check since that game.

The major difference between the sides remains the salary-cap roadblock. The NHL wants a cap to achieve what it calls cost certainty. The players' association says it will never accept that.

There might be a month left to salvage the season, but the sides seem too far apart on the philosophical difference of a cap. The last NHL lockout ended with a deal on Jan. 11, 1995, allowing for a 48-game season.

This lockout has already forced the cancellation of 414 regular-season games and the 2005 All-Star Game.

Asked about the prospects of having a season, Ottawa forward Daniel Alfredsson said: "If they stand by their salary cap, the chances are none."

NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman acknowledged the league is after a cap.

"My hope is that the union leadership recognizes that the owners' resolve is great," Bettman said. "We only know of really one approach to meaningfully address and fix our problems. And unless someone can miraculously come up with another approach, which I am highly skeptical about always anxious to listen, we're committed to fixing this the right way."

The league proposal contained a cap, which, based on last year's economics, would see team payroll at always around \$34 million, a minimum of \$34.6 million and maximum of \$38.6 million. The Pittsburgh Penguins and Nashville

Predators would have to increase their payrolls while the Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings would have to dramatically reduce theirs.

The NHL also revamped the players' association rollback offer by significantly reducing the salaries of the richest players and leaving the lowest paid untouched. Players making less than \$800,000 would not have their salary decreased. Those making \$5 million or more would have 35 percent taken away from their existing contracts.

Bettman said the offer made by the union last Thursday, which featured a 24-percent salary rollback, was a "big-time, significant and meaningful move" but was a short-term fix that wouldn't cure the league's financial troubles in the long run.

"In short, the league took what they liked from our proposal, made major changes and slapped a salary cap on top of it," union head Bob Goodenow said. "Put simply, our proposal provides the basis for a negotiated agreement. The NHL's does not."

The union's offer also contained a luxury tax, a revenue sharing plan, a lower cap on entry-level contracts and bonuses, and a way for teams to take players to arbitration.

But because it doesn't guarantee what each team will pay its players, it doesn't meet the solution the owners are seeking.

"We have no interest in a luxury tax at any level at any threshold," Bettman said.



New Jersey guard Jason Kidd, who has played five games since knee surgery in July, has been limited to 20 minutes a game.

geivity is what I think about now, being around in April for next five years, to be able to play without pain."

Eric Williams, who scored 21 points, said it would be foolish to ask Kidd to play more now.

He still has a long career ahead of him, Williams said. "We all want him to stay out there, and I'm pretty sure he wants to, too, but you have to be wise. Once he gets to the point where he can continue to play on a high level, that's when we look forward to him playing all the time."

Kidd hopes to increase his playing time after the New Year.

Whether he is still in New Jersey by then remains to be seen.

Current climate hasn't put heat on owners, players

The NHL is disappearing right before our eyes, and the reason is simple.

Almost nobody has a dog in this fight.

You expect fans to lose interest whenever billions of battle millionaires for a larger slice of the economic pie, but not to the extent being seen in the dog-fight between the NHL and its players.

Over a collective bargaining agreement.

More than half the Americans polled by The Hockey News were surprised to learn the league hasn't even opened for business

this season. That number is considerably lower north of the border, but even there — if you take most-traveled pro and amateur comedian Brett Hull at his word — fans are learning to make do without the NHL.

The Phoenix Coyotes star turned up on the "Weekend Update" segment of "Saturday Night Live" and was asked, as a Canadian, what he thought about the recent landmark ruling by Canada's Supreme Court that gay marriage was constitutional.

"That's what happens in Canada when there's no hockey," Hull said. "Guys have a lot of time to hang out, talk about their feelings, rent thing you know they're in love with each other."

"I've got nothing against it," he added, "but I'd rather be playing hockey."

Chances that Hull will get his wish anytime soon took a serious hit Tuesday. After months of avoiding each other like a rash, the second negotiating session between management and labor in a week lasted just 3½ hours. Commissioner Gary Bettman didn't find the words "salary cap" anywhere in the proposal from the players union, inserted them in a counterproposal and handed it back an hour later. The players reacted to that addition pretty much the way they always have.

"Put simply," NHLPA chief Bob Goodenow said, "our proposal provides the basis for a negotiated agreement. The NHL's does not."

Afterward, both sides retreated to their corners and resumed praying for a bolt of lightning to strike.

When Bettman took the job as commissioner fresh off a stint as NBA boss David Stern's right-hand man, few people took seriously his pledge to put hockey on an equal footing with the

other major team sports. And if the work stoppage he has forced careers out of control for a little while longer, Bettman will have surpassed major league baseball, the NFL and the NBA — just not in the way he, or anyone else, envisioned.

Pro hockey is on the verge of becoming the first North American sports league to cancel a full season because of a labor dispute.

By this point in previous negotiations, fans of the sport would have chosen sides, with the resulting public pressure forcing one or the other — or both — to make meaningful concessions. The only thing apathy has done, instead, is make both sides more cynical.

On its face, the players' latest move was impressive. It proposed to roll back salaries by 24 percent, throw in a luxury tax and revenue sharing, lower the cap on entry-level contracts and bonuses, and provide arbitration for third-line centers who wouldn't be making \$9 million a year and the New Jersey Devils would have seen their payroll slashed from \$60 million to \$46 million.

"This is no grandstanding play," Goodenow said last week. "This is no P.R. move."

Yet that's exactly what it was. He knows that salaries consume more than 70 percent of total revenues and more important, that Bettman wasn't about to consider an agreement that didn't fix the owners' costs at much closer to 50 percent.

The commissioner, on the other hand, hasn't wavered from the start. He acknowledged one more time that any savings from the players plan would be squandered by his owners, likely after a season and another round or two of free-agent bidding wars, and he's right.

The only way to short-circuit that process, says the NFL and NBA have learned at great expense, is with a salary cap. Baseball, though, staggers from one negotiation to the next without a cap in place, and that's the model Goodenow has in his sights.

"We believe that every team has a salary cap," he said. "It's common sense."

Bettman and Goodenow have about a month to get realistic before the season is lost. But because neither side feels the fans at its back, there's no sense of urgency to make a decisive move. The closest thing to an encouraging word was uttered by Hull, and it wasn't much.

"I think with the strikeball risk and the salary cap, baseball," he said, "I think hockey is looking classier all the time."

Jim Litke is a national sports columnist for The Associated Press. Write to him at: jlitke@ap.org.



Louisville's tuneup for UK is ragged

The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Larry O'Bannon wasn't concerned about a possible career-high.

He had 25 points Tuesday night to lead No. 13 Louisville to an 85-51 victory over North Carolina A&T on Tuesday night. That was one point shy of the senior swingman's best output, last season at Memphis.

"Some of the fellows pointed it out," said O'Bannon, who was 10-for-14 from the field and had 11 rebounds in leading the Cardinals to their fifth straight victory.

"I really wasn't worried about it," Francisco Garcia added 12 points and Ellis Myles had 11 points and 10 rebounds for Louisville, which shot 43.3 percent from the field (29-for-67) but only 18-for-33 from the free throw line.

The Cardinals turned the ball over 22 times but forced North Carolina A&T into 24 turnovers and outscored the Aggies 58-40. But the Cardinals gave up 19 offensive rebounds, and that didn't please Louisville coach Rick Pitino, whose team hosts No. 9 Kentucky on Saturday.

"We called a timeout to specifically talk about blocking out, and the very next time down the floor, we didn't do it," Pitino said. "We're still not blocking out like we are supposed to. We got a 'W' tonight, but we didn't play our 'A' game."

North Carolina A&T (1-8) shot 28.1 percent for the game (20-for-71), including 3-for-18 from three-point range.

The Cardinals (6-1) broke from a 12-point half-time lead with a 12-5 run that put them ahead 52-33 with 14½ minutes to play.

"We just had more manpower," O'Bannon said. In Tuesday's other Top 25 game:



North Carolina A&T's Jeff Avis, right, challenges a shot by Louisville's Taguan Dean on Tuesday. Louisville shot 54 percent from the line (18 of 33), committed 22 turnovers and gave up 19 offensive rebounds.

No. 7 Duke 88, Illinois-Chicago 55: Shelden Williams had 23 points, 14 rebounds and seven blocked shots while J.J. Redick added 21 points for host Duke, which improved to 7-0 for the fourth time in five seasons and blocked a school-record 18 shots.

Duke shot 49 percent and used a 21-0 run spanning half-time to turn the game into a rout. The Blue Devils held the Flames (3-4) to one field goal over a 7½-minute span.

Majerus reportedly set to coach USC next year

By PAUL GUTIERREZ
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Former Utah coach and current ESPN analyst Rick Majerus and USC officials were finalizing a deal Tuesday night that will have Majerus introduced as the new Trojans basketball coach in a news conference Wednesday, sources said.

Majerus, 56, who was in the Los Angeles area Tuesday night, did not return phone messages, while Daryl Gross, USC's senior associate athletic director, who has been handling the search, would not comment.

A source close to Majerus said the contract would be for five years at \$1 million a season, and although Majerus is expected to leave his job with ESPN immediately — it is not thought USC will be involved in any type of buyout with the cable network — he will not take over the program until after this season.

Majerus, who was the head coach at Utah for 15 years, Ball State for two and Marquette for three. He has a career winning percentage of .742 (422-147) and has taken his teams to the postseason 15 times, going 18-11 in the NCAA tournament with four Sweet 16 appearances.

He left Utah abruptly in January after suffering severe chest pains. He had already undergone heart bypass surgery, missing most of the 1989-90 season at

Utah, and has battled weight problems his entire career.

Interim USC coach Jim Saia, who was installed by Athletic Director Mike Garrett after firing Henry Bibby on Dec. 6, will continue to run the team along with Bibby's old staff. It is not known how closely Majerus will monitor the program under Saia or whether he can actively recruit.

The Trojans host Western Michigan in a nonconference game Saturday before departing for Hawaii on Sunday for the Rainbow Classic.

"What I told the team was that we can just control what we can — the rest of the season," Saia said. "We still need to just focus on Western Michigan. If (the Majerus hiring) is the case, then that's not until next ... April. It doesn't affect the season."

"I think everyone's excited about the season. We're a senior-oriented team, so we're not going to worry about next season."

With six seniors on the roster and with sophomore Rodrick Stewart and freshman Emanuel Willis having received their releases from the school, and sophomore Lodrick Stewart threatening to transfer on numerous occasions, Majerus could inherit a team with only three returnees — guards Gabe Pruitt, Dwayne Shackelford and Nick Young. USC signed two high school players in November — shooting guard Sean Odizic and small forward Mike Freeman.

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AN ARMY OF ONE

SPORTS



Reports say Cardinals lose out to Boston in bid to retain All-Star SS Renteria, Page 28

Fading into a purple haze

Late swoon puts Vikings at risk of missing playoffs

BY DAVE CAMPBELL
The Associated Press

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. — The Minnesota Vikings were convinced they wouldn't end this season like they did the last, when a 6-0 start was wiped out by a 3-7 finish.

Well, they could be right. This season might be worse.

Fresh off their fifth loss in seven games, the Vikings are 7-6 and coach Mike Tice's future is in question. For Minnesota's tortured football fans, these circumstances are hauntingly familiar. This franchise can surely compete with anyone in the disappointment department.

"Right now things don't look very cheerful," said Tice, who spent much of his Monday playing Dr. Phil to those needing therapy after a 27-23 home defeat to struggling Seattle.

"You want all your goals to come out exactly as you planned ... not many times does it come out exactly the way you dreamed about."

Over their 44-year history, the Vikings have been one of the NFL's most consistent winners — but something always keeps them from greatness. As people who root for the rival Green Bay Packers love to point out, Minnesota was beaten in all four Super Bowl appearances — the last coming after the 1976 season.



Linebackers E.J. Henderson, left, Chris Claiborne, center, and Keith Newman, right, watch the Vikings fall apart Sunday.



Minnesota Vikings quarterback Daunte Culpepper, left, is brought down by Seattle Seahawks defensive end Antonio Cochran, right, on the last play of the Seahawks 27-23 victory Sunday in Minneapolis, the Vikings' fifth loss in seven games.

Coach Dennis Green won 100 games in 10 years, but his teams frequently choked in the playoffs. The most memorable, or cringe-inducing, of those disasters came in the NFC championship game following the 1998 season. The team that went 15-1 and set the league's all-time scoring record blew a late lead and lost in overtime at home to the Atlanta Falcons.

Two years later, the Vikings dropped their final three regular-season games to lose the NFC's top seed and were embarrassingly eliminated by New York in the conference title game at Giants Stadium, 41-0.

Tice's rebuilding project seemed to hit stride last year with six straight wins to open the season, but then came a brutal stretch in which Minnesota lost to all four teams that finished 4-12. The last one, to Arizona on the game's final play, stung the most — and left the Vikings out of the playoffs for a third consecutive year.

Owner Red McCombs, in town for the organization's annual Christmas party, was reminded Monday of a somber plane ride back to San Antonio with his family after that devastating defeat to the Cardinals.

McCombs asked his grandson, Joseph, if his friends would be teasing him the next day in school because the Vikings lost. He said they would, and McCombs asked him how he usually handles it.

"Well, you know, it's not the first time," the 13-year-old replied.

Nope, it certainly isn't.

Despite a 5-1 start in a soft NFC that suggested a chance for January success, the Metrodome — perennially one of the most difficult places for opponents to play — hasn't been as loud this season.

Especially in situations, like a critical third down for the defense in a tight game or a long touchdown reception by Randy Moss, that normally require earplugs or threaten long-term hearing ability.

It's almost as if these scarred patrons are simply expecting something bad to happen and can't conjure enough energy to lift their voices to the usual high level.

Tice, the league's lowest-paid coach, has managed to maintain his optimism despite the uncertainty. McCombs must decide by Jan. 1 whether to pick up a \$1 million option on the coach's contract for 2005, and inaction would give Tice the freedom to pursue other jobs on Jan. 31.

McCombs has said repeatedly he'll deal with it after the season, but the Vikings' final regular-season game is the day after the deadline and their playoff fate probably won't be decided by then.

If Minnesota doesn't qualify for the post-season, it's hard to imagine Tice coming back. But McCombs reiterated his support this week.

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Fueled Lakers
rolled in Seattle

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Duckett
undergoes
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D.C. baseball deal
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